



# Fairfield Hills

## Master Plan Review Committee

### 1.0 Introduction

In 2001, Newtown voters approved the purchase of the 186 acre Fairfield Hills Campus and surrounding property. Core themes were established at that time related to open space, playing fields, economic development, educational uses, municipal use, and the need to preserve the campus environment with Town control of the property. The 2005 the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Ad Hoc committee further developed these themes resulting in the existing 2005 Master Plan. The plan called for a 5 year review resulting in the convening of this 2010 Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee, hereinafter referred to as the “Committee.” On June 21, 2010, the Committee began its inquiry into the existing plan and public perspectives about it, as chartered by the Board of Selectmen.

### 1.1 Our Charge

The primary purpose of the Committee was to review the 2005 Master Plan for the Fairfield Hills campus and property (adopted March 17, 2005). The Committee was charged to develop a community-engaged process and to use it to help establish recommendations as the Committee deems appropriate for revisions or modifications to that Plan.

The Committee was to use the existing Master Plan (March 2005) as the starting point for its review, understanding that the Town Meeting in June 2001 identified five themes for campus development. The original Master Plan document is available at:

<http://www.fairfieldhills.org/PDF/MasterPlan2005.pdf>. A [recap of the document and summary of subsequent activities](#), provided by the Committee, is available in Appendix D and also [online](#).

The Committee would be called upon to provide input, advice, and direction to the Board of Selectmen related to these core themes. Further, the Committee was encouraged to provide recommendations related to any additional themes, concepts or issues concerned with the development of the Fairfield Hills Campus and property.

#### Major themes from Town Meeting in June 2001

- The Campus should contain a substantial open space component inclusive of both active playing fields and passive open space
- One or more of the existing structures should be renovated and adapted for use as Town offices and possibly educational uses
- Selected structures within the entry plaza portion of the Campus should be renovated for economic development activity, such as small professional offices.
- A core area of the campus could be reserved for revenue generating economic development activities compatible with other uses and the surrounding area.
- All components should be provided within the context of a master plan that preserves the campus environment, with the Town maintaining overall control of the Campus

## 1.2 Our Process

The Committee solicited input and active participation from members of the public, community boards and commissions, and such Town of Newtown departments as determined appropriate by the Committee. Specifically, we focused on:

- 1) Becoming informed: From June 2010 to February 2011, members of the Committee focused on understanding the 2005 Master Plan, municipal needs, and the ongoing realities of the property as well as taking a broader look at the town overall. We released eleven reports that captured our overall work in this area.
- 2) Engaging members of community to help identify potential visions and elements of those visions: We organized a randomly-selected Community Input Council and sponsored two Open Community Conversations that used café-style discussion groups.
- 3) Launching a town-wide survey: Key elements arising from steps 1 and 2 were then integrated into a town-wide survey. The survey had 1041 responses with a good demographic representation of the Newtown community.
- 4) Preparing recommendations: Using our knowledge of and experience from all three earlier steps, we deliberated both individually and as a committee to reach the recommendations summarized below.

Summaries of our approach and findings for the first three steps are included as separate appendices (D, C, and B, respectively). The remainder of this document includes the recommendations and summaries of the discussions that occurred during the fourth step.

## 2.0 Recommendations

Several “guiding principles” have emerged based on our research and public engagement efforts. First, there seems to be very wide agreement across members of the community that Fairfield Hills should be a place that is generally open to Newtown residents. Therefore, development that significantly impacts the public’s access should be discouraged, e.g., large-scale corporate, educational, or residential should not be allowed. Restriction of individual buildings or portions thereof is acceptable provided that the overall effect is not to block off a large area. Second, there is broad support for limited commercial development, particularly if such development supports people’s use of the property, e.g., cafes, small retail, etc. Third, based on our research and understanding, the buildings appear to be a hurdle for development. It costs as much (or potentially even more) to rehab a building as to demolish it and build from scratch. The conditions of the buildings especially deter their use by small businesses. Fourth, there is still the wide-spread opinion that residential housing should not be a part of the future of Fairfield Hills in any form. Finally, given the current diversity of opinions among Newtown residents and the overall uncertainty of what the potential futures may hold, we believe that the best approach for enabling the uses below is to plan big but start small. Uses that gain support from the community should be cultivated through additional private and public efforts.

During our community engagement activities (step 2), the idea of creating a vision that could help frame the ultimate future for the campus and property was raised, and resonated strongly and consistently throughout. Such a vision could help guide decisions about specific development opportunities and ensure a more cohesive and effective end result. Several potential visions were created and honed throughout the public engagement phases. Based on this input and overall interest, we added a section for these potential visions to the survey. The

results were significantly in support two of two proposed visions: “Focus on a Central Park and Community Recreation” and “Focus on Local Municipal and Community Needs.” In fact, 60% and 65%<sup>1</sup> of the survey participants responded favorably to these. In addition, we asked the community about specific features in the survey. Their responses indicated that some retail business in support of recreational and community also had broad support. In addition, there was an underlying concern about the impact of the property on the tax burden, especially in the write in comments. The survey showed 64% of the respondents were open to using 40+ acres to “play a significant role in generating income to the town through economic development.”

Based on these findings we crafted a vision statement, below, that reinforces and largely coincides with the vision inherent within the current Master Plan, but states it more explicitly. We also delved more deeply into supportive uses, looking at both pros and cons for each. Some of these thoughts and discussions have been added to the recommended uses, below. In addition, based on community input about the need to plan for a more cohesive future for the property, we proposed a couple of higher level themes that represent more tangible implementations of the vision.

While the following vision and recommendations are offered as a starting point for the revision of the current Master Plan, we recognize that this work is just the beginning. We encourage that the next step (i.e., the actual revision of the Master Plan) include additional public engagement to help flesh out some of the higher level themes and initiate development that the public both supports and helps to build.

## 2.1 Vision and Use Recommendations

### Vision Statement

We envision Fairfield Hills as a vibrant sustainable destination where all members of the community can go to enjoy recreational, social, cultural, indoor and outdoor activities. The campus provides a home for some municipal services and a gathering place for a variety of town-wide events. Small retail stores, restaurants, and professional offices are nestled harmoniously within the campus. The well-designed campus connects the history of the site with its future, with the town maintaining overall control of the property and preserving the campus environment and architectural style.

### Supported Uses

During our public engagement sessions, the following uses were widely supported in general. However, there was some divergence in terms of scale, that is, community-centered vs. regional as stated in the [“Fairfield Hills Community Input Council: Draft Outcomes; Points of agreement and points of divergence”](#) ([online copy](#)) summary:

*“One area of divergence is the SCALE of the ‘destination’ Fairfield Hills should be. While we agree on culture and recreation as the two main themes, some of us would like for these to be primarily municipal destinations (a community cultural center and an indoor recreational facility) with residents of other areas welcome as well. In contrast, others of us favor a larger, regional-scale theatre or sports arena at Fairfield Hills, which would generate even greater revenue for the town as a whole.”*

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<sup>1</sup> The listed numbers include the top three boxes in the survey, i.e., Extremely Favorable, Very Favorable, and Somewhat Favorable. Refer to the [Survey Results](#) in Appendix B for more complete information.

However, 85% of survey respondents agreed that the “Fairfield Hills campus should be a community and municipal center for town services, the arts, recreation and open space.” Based on this input, the uses below emphasize the community-based scale.

In the survey, the uses were further broken down into specific features as a way to better understand what the public preferred within each use category. Twenty five features received a majority<sup>2</sup> agreeing that the feature would be acceptable within the Fairfield Hills campus and/or surrounding property. Of those 25, 12 had an approval rating of 80% or higher. These 12 features span all five uses described below suggesting that, if possible, a plan that provides a blend of uses would likely be supported by the majority of Newtown residents and would reflect the diversity of interest and opinion found in our community.

**Community Culture and Arts:** A rich assortment of cultural and artistic events awaits residents visiting the campus. These events may include both indoor and outdoor exhibits and performances, as well as arts education classes tailored to diverse age groups and a garden commemorating the facility’s history, staff, and patients.

Survey respondents echoed the desire to have the campus integrate a strong arts component. In fact, arts components account for 2 of the 12 top-rated features in the survey. 90% of respondents agreed with including “a band shell for outdoor concerts” and 88% with including “a performing arts and cultural arts center to hold music and dance performances, art exhibits, etc.” In addition, 79% of the respondents were open to a senior center on the property, provided it was a “shared space with other community uses (arts, recreation, etc.)” While we understand that the senior leadership does not support shared space within a recreational facility, it may consider being a part of a cultural/arts facility.

Cultural uses were also discussed during our Committee deliberations (e.g., honoring the history of the property with a commemorative garden and/or plaque reflecting the campus’s history as a care facility and home to thousands of patients). We believe that a commemorative garden should be included that engages Newtown residents in the design and implementation of the garden.

While an arts component was a part of the original Master Plan, funding never materialized. Therefore we recommend a more concerted effort to identify funding sources for a performing arts center and outdoor performance venue.

**Community Recreation:** Indoor and outdoor recreation and sports provide year-round entertainment. Athletic fields support local teams and leagues as well as the occasional non-team event, for example pet walks, auto shows, etc. An expanded Parks & Recreation facility houses the department staff, pools, teen meeting zone, etc. During winter, the extended campus becomes a haven for the outdoor enthusiast with cross country skiing and sledding.

The 12 top-rated features included 3 that were in support of recreation. A “paved trail system for walking, jogging, biking, dog walking, etc.” was tied for number 1, with 94% of respondents supporting it. In addition, 88% supported “active recreation in the form of baseball/softball/soccer/lacrosse fields” and 83% supported a “new facility for the Parks and

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<sup>2</sup> The numbers reported here include the top three boxes in the survey, including Extremely Favorable, Very Favorable, and Somewhat Favorable. Refer to the [Survey Results](#) in Appendix B for more complete information.

Rec dept. that includes an indoor pool and community center.” In addition, a clear majority were also open to the following recreational features:

- “Playground and/or water spray park for kids” (77%)
- “Horse trails” (67%)
- “Bocce courts” (64%)
- “A large private sports complex with amenities such as batting cages, golf driving range, indoor climbing wall, turf fields, for indoor soccer/lacrosse/football/baseball/softball practices, etc.” (60%)
- “Indoor ice rink” (59%)

The results suggest that the property provide diverse recreational options, and so support the community as a whole. While some of the recreational uses more directly support organized sports and recreation, there also needs to be options for community members who do not participate in team activities.

**Town and Community Services:** A portion of the campus provides for community needs, such as social services, emergency services and a town green.

At this time, there is broad support for using a portion of the campus to provide for such community needs. 85% of the survey respondents share the perspective: “The campus should be a community and municipal center for town services...” More specifically, 85% of the respondents agreed with including a “social services ‘hub’ within the campus (utilizing the existing duplex buildings) to support organizations like Kevin’s community Center, Newtown Youth and Family Services, or Newtown Social Services.” In addition, 79% were open to including “a new senior center as part of shared space with other community uses (arts, recreation, etc)” while 67% were amenable to a “new stand-alone senior center.” Furthermore, 64% were somewhat, very, or extremely supportive of “Relocation of police and/or emergency services.”

One concern during the Committee’s deliberation process was the impact of selecting locations for municipal uses that could result in scattered, haphazard development, possibly limiting future potential uses. While the concern was raised primarily when discussing potential commercial use (see below), we feel that fragmenting the property with spots of municipal use could impinge other development as well. Therefore we highly suggest that municipal uses should be consolidated so as to not limit other potential uses that might require a large contiguous plot of land. We further suggest that all development themes should follow this concept so the property can better support concurrent uses (and help avoid the potential for a fragmented/disjointed mix of uses).

**Open Land:** Visitors are greeted by open areas offering an interconnecting trail system. Some of these areas are designated for potential future town and community needs while others are more formally protected (e.g., the High Meadow). These areas of the campus are available for non-permanent, community-initiated uses including, for example, expanded community gardens, playing fields, and community event areas.

The number one response to the six proposed scenarios in the survey was for the campus to focus on the idea of a central park and community recreation destination. This supports maintaining open fields and wooded areas throughout the Fairfield Hills campus – for when most of us think of parks, we certainly think of open areas of land for multiple uses. Furthermore, the town-wide survey results showed 85% of those surveyed favored the Fairfield

Hills campus as a “community and municipal center for town services, arts, recreation and open space.” Also, 85% agreed with “reserve (land bank) land for future town needs, even if we don’t know what they are now.” Of that reserved land, 62% were open to reserving “no more than 30 acres for the site of a future school like a middle school or school academy.” Additionally 94% favored a more permanent “large town green with and outdoor stage/gazebo for outdoor activities and support for outdoor events like Relay for Life, farmer’s market, etc.” and 90% surveyed would like to see the High Meadow formally designated as open space forever. That being the case, there was discussion to the fact that while the land may be deemed open space, it would not necessarily have to be returned to its natural state.

When we use the term open land, we are not suggesting the grounds cannot be used but instead would be more like a fairground setting (80% in favor of this) or similar, where activities such as car shows and other town wide events could be held. This would also include further Parks & Rec fields that add to the open appearance of the campus and yet are non-permanent in nature should future municipal needs require the space. In addition, some of the area could be used for community gardens (85% agreed with this use).

Some examples that were discussed include but are not limited to:

- walking trails
- meadows
- sports fields
- open, non-organized fields for activities like throwing a Frisbee, having a picnic, etc

What is not included in the areas deemed open land as we see it are:

- parking lots
- land with permanent buildings
- cultural centers or large performing arts stage

In the end, the open land should support the rural, park-like feel of the campus.

**Commercial/Economic:** Limited retail / restaurant businesses are available to serve the needs of those participating in activities on the campus. In addition, a few buildings house small-businesses and professional offices, creating a rich entrepreneurial environment for the Newtown community. This potentially provides a small revenue stream to the town to help reduce the overall financial burden of the campus.

Limited retail was one of the top 12 features, with 86% of respondents supporting “small retail shops including restaurant, ice cream parlor, coffee shop, etc. – all ancillary businesses to service recreational activities.” In addition, 68% of respondents were open to including “new construction or renovations to attract smaller businesses like medical/dental offices, banks, realtors, etc.,” 66% were amenable to “new construction to attract smaller corporate/professional businesses,” and 65% were somewhat, very, or extremely supportive of creating “a new ‘main street’ destination environment with combined restaurants, retail and housing, like what you’d find in towns like Ridgefield, Westport, Bethel, West Hartford, etc.”

With two-thirds of the survey respondents open to a significant retail hub and knowing that such a hub would entice a segment of the community not yet represented by the other uses, the committee engaged in a long discussion about potentially recommending the property also provide for a “retail destination.” During our June 20, 2011 meeting, some members offered the following as a possible recommendation:

A 5-10 acre, well-designed, “upscale” retail and restaurant plaza-type area, specifically created to invite walking, strolling, and meandering. Potential design aspects of this feature include: no more than two stories; cobblestone or brick walkways; benches and outdoor eating areas; professional offices on the second story, retail stores below.

The committee explored in depth the “pros and cons” of including this recommendation, ultimately deciding that it was not appropriate for Fairfield Hills at this time. However, we recommend that the revised Master Plan be designed in a manner that allows for such a use to be revisited in the next review. Otherwise, we are concerned that the land may become too fragmented to allow for such a destination without compromising the balance of green space and development.

Some of the pros discussed include:

- It would bring more and different life to the campus, include nightlife and more visits.
- It would increase the revenue from the property.
- It could bring more financial help with upgrading the infrastructure.

Some of the cons include:

- It would increase competition with existing businesses, potentially resulting in other areas of town losing businesses.
- If such development is not done well or falters, it could change the character of Fairfield Hills and diminish the park-like feel.
- The developer would likely prefer to purchase the property for such a development and would very likely seek land visible from Wasserman Way.
- It would likely need to include regional/national chain stores and restaurants to be of interest to developers.

## Potential Cohesive Themes

The Committee believes that distinctive themes have begun to emerge from the broad vision above that have the potential to inspire the town and galvanize resources for development. These themes surfaced during our public engagement sessions and were highly supported by survey results. The themes below are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Rather, they could be designed to complement one another and thus the long term development of the property may be a blend. At this time, the themes are framed out but in need of further detail. We support the creation of a process (see below) for further exploring these and other possibilities.

**Community Culture and Arts Destination:** This theme enhances the cultural opportunities available to visitors by expanding the number and extent of arts venues and educational experiences. It also could grow to include an art school, museums, galleries, and a space for artists’ studios, along with retail businesses that cater to artists and their customers. We did not have the time or resources to further elaborate on this theme.

**Community Recreation Destination:** This theme extends the recreational opportunities by working with the private sector to provide a wider range of activities including, for example, an ice rink, arcade, YMCA (or equivalent), retail focusing on recreational activities, and classes like rock climbing and plant identification, etc. We did not have the time or resources to further elaborate on this theme.

**Agricultural Activity and Destination:** In conjunction with the general uses for recreation, culture and arts, and community services, the campus, along with agricultural lands on the other side of Wasserman Way, could support a range of activities connected to the sustainable agriculture movement. These might include organic farming of vegetables and livestock and the use of this food (and that from other local farms) in a “farm to table” restaurant and perhaps even in our local schools. There could be a training and/or research component developed in conjunction with Taunton Press, Certified Gardeners, UConn Agricultural Extension and/or the CT Northeast Organic Farming Association. School children could also learn about farming and perhaps participate in some of the work and/or research. Grant money and partnership opportunities might be available for a number of these activities.



## **2.2 Process Recommendations**

### **Ensure Operational Transparency**

This committee's public engagement work identified a great deal of interest and concern about the fate of the Fairfield Hills property. This work also identified the perception that the flow of information to the public was not optimized. The current Master Plan does not provide for, nor do current processes specifically support, transparency in action planning and decision making beyond scheduled public meetings. We suggest: 1) a review of how the Town is presently communicating what is being considered for the property and 2) open-minded consideration of all possible options for enhancing communications with the public. One example might be assignment of specific responsibilities to a town employee in the role of a "Fairfield Hills public communication liaison", to ensure effective public communication of all related activities.

During our deliberations, we discussed whether we should weigh in on the role of the Fairfield Hills Authority, given input from the public engagement sessions and members of the community. We felt that recommendations targeting the Authority would be beyond the scope of our charter. However, we agree that establishing open communication could help reposition the Authority in the eyes of the public. Having open communication from the Fairfield Hills Authority and other town boards, both going forward and in reviewing the past would help build trust, something that was highlighted during our second Open Community Conversation. The [notes](#) from that engagement include: "We need to feel more trust in our elected officials, that we can trust them to do what we elected them to do. To accomplish that, there needs to be more transparency with regard to planning, financials, etc. There has been significant progress in this area, and it needs to continue. Transparency gives people a greater sense of security."

### **Support Continued Public Participation**

As noted above, our work identified a great deal of interest and concern about the fate of the Fairfield Hills property, including what role citizens might play. We recommend the continued involvement of citizens in key activities as the Fairfield Hills vision and plans materialize. Continued public participation will maintain levels of interest, commitment, and resources both within and beyond the town borders. The Victory Gardens are a recent example of what can happen when engaged citizens are empowered.

In line with the Operational Transparency recommendation above, we recommend that as part of the revised Master Plan, there should be a specific element outlining public participation in support of the refinement and implementation of the Vision. As an example, town leadership should enable support for the emergence of citizen group(s) to continue development and exploration of the themes suggested by this Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee in section 1.2.

If one or more of the themes relating to arts, agriculture and recreation (as well as any other themes that may yet emerge) are fully designed, they offer the potential to energize and inspire the town and to shift the development dynamics at Fairfield Hills in a substantial way. As mentioned above, we've already experienced such inspiration with the Victory Garden. For this to happen more extensively, however, each theme will require creative thinking around the design of specific features, discussions with diverse stakeholders, and creative financing that might involve multiple organizations. We suggest that the Board of Selectmen charge the

Fairfield Hills Authority with overall accountability for fostering the development of citizen-led groups that are inspired to explore these possibilities.

Finally, we believe that the public engagement process employed by this committee sets a high standard for the town. We strongly recommend that similarly creative and robust processes be employed in the future whenever possible. Please consider the document “Core Principles for Public Engagement,” provided by the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation at [http://www.ncdd.org/files/NCDD2010\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.ncdd.org/files/NCDD2010_Resource_Guide.pdf), for a set of guidelines. Also, we feel our progress and achievements were greatly enhanced by the involvement of Rosa Zubizarreta (a professional facilitator from the firm, Diapaxis), and we highly recommend that further efforts also leverage the services of a professional facilitator, if at all possible.

**Drive towards one town-wide plan, but repeat the Fairfield Hills Review process until the vision is more fully implemented.**

We believe that Fairfield Hills should not be treated in isolation from the rest of the town properties and needs. However in the near-term, we recommend repeating the existing five year review process for the Fairfield Hills campus until such a time that the character of the property more fully emerges. We strongly recommend that the subsequent review(s) includes public engagement processes similar to those used by this committee and those specified above. Specifically, the next review can provide an appropriate focus on the unique needs and opportunities of the Fairfield Hills campus, but should also include a town-wide perspective that incorporates all municipal lands, design districts, and the broader needs of the town as we attempted to do for this review.

When we initially started as a committee, several of us were hoping that this review would be the final review focused specifically on Fairfield Hills. We believed that the town would benefit more from a review that involved not only the entire town but also the influence from the larger region. However as we continued, it became apparent that the property would likely need another review to ensure that the development was cohesive and addressed the needs and preferences of town residents.

## ***2.3 Implementation Recommendations***

**Support the Fairfield Hills Authority’s ongoing review of the lease structure and terms.**

We support the Fairfield Hills Authority in their review of the current lease structure in order to make it more viable for development, including reevaluation of the up-front lease payments and term flexibility. However, we highly recommend that any lease include language to ensure that promised action will be taken especially should terms include very long timeframes.

In addition, we highly suggest that the Fairfield Hills Authority be tasked with an ongoing community dialog and open communication process described above, when possible, to ensure that the public feels informed and can build its trust with the process.

**Do not consider selling a parcel of land at Fairfield Hills unless certain guidelines are met.**

We do not recommend the consideration of selling a parcel of land at Fairfield Hills unless the following guidelines are met:

- 1) It is in support of a cohesive theme along the lines of section 1.2.
- 2) It includes a robust public engagement process that leads to public support.

- 3) It is limited to those areas targeted for economic development (i.e., "open land" designations should not be considered at any time).
- 4) There is clear economic benefit for the town.
- 5) It is an open and transparent deal.

While we ultimately decided for the recommendation above, we spent several meetings discussing the merits of leasing vs. selling land. Given the depth of this conversation, the pros for each are detailed below:

Pros for leasing:

- Given that 76% of survey respondents are in favor of "lease rather than sell" and only 45% in favor of a sale, selling land could seriously worsen public mistrust of local government.
- The terms of a sale might appear to be beneficial to the town and then later turn out to include hidden costs.
- The buyer may intend to be buying the property for a certain purpose and then instead develop it for something else (within the constraints of zoning) afterward.
- After a sale is completed, the buyer could fail to fulfill the agreement to demolish the building and just let it decay further. While this could be mitigated by recourse available to the town, it would add to the town's legal costs.
- The desire for short-term political benefit and financial gain (appearance of making progress with Fairfield Hills, quick cash infusion into town) could cloud judgment leading to a sale that would not serve the long-term public interest and negatively impact the implementation of the larger vision.

Pros for selling:

- A sale could serve to raise some capital and so we could begin implementing the larger vision for Fairfield Hills.
- Should we sell a piece of land that has a building slated for demolition or refurbishing, the new owner would be taking responsibility for those costs as part of the payment for the land. In this scenario, there might not be as much additional capital, but there would still be a defrayment of costs.
- A sale could also serve as an ongoing source of some revenue as the new owner would be paying property taxes.
- When someone owns land, they are generally more willing to invest in infrastructure and improvements than someone who is only leasing.
- If the sale of a portion of the land led to it being successfully developed as a "small business incubator," this could lead to new job creation at Fairfield Hills and eventually throughout the town.
- In some respects, such as the failure to maintain a building in a safe condition, the town might have more recourse against an owner than it would against a tenant.

**Act as quickly as possible to prevent further deterioration and secure the renovation of those buildings that can be saved and to demolish those deemed unusable.**

We face a very difficult and unfortunate state of affairs. There is a strong interest – both on this committee and in the town at large – in saving at least some of the buildings on the campus. But time is running out for doing so given their ongoing deterioration. Indeed, many citizens will be upset if most or all of the existing buildings are not saved. At the same time it appears to us that the majority of the buildings are already too far gone to be preserved at less than a prohibitive cost, in addition to presenting configurations that are particularly challenging to effective reuse. In addition, we believe the presence of other buildings represents a substantial

barrier to realizing the recreation and public use themes desired by residents as well as economic development. Meanwhile, we are told that budget constraints severely limit the town's ability to act in any fashion (be it demolition or development) and economic conditions make it highly unlikely that the kinds of commercial development the town might support will occur any time soon.

Absent some creative or fortuitous developments that shift these dynamics, it appears that the buildings will only be taken down slowly and that any reuse will become increasingly difficult as deterioration proceeds. In addition, there is a "Catch-22" since the presence of many buildings represents a substantial barrier to both recreational and economic development. Anticipating this state of affairs, the current master plan recommended that all the buildings be torn down if they could not be renovated within the five year period that has just elapsed.

We recommend that the buildings that are most clearly too far gone and which pose a public danger and liability for the town should be removed on the most aggressive schedule possible. The committee sees Shelton Hall as the clearest candidate in this category. Its site is also suitable for a town green and gazebo – something with a relatively modest cost (once the demo is complete) that was indicated in our public engagement processes to be highly desired, as it could support community and cultural events.

At the same time (and despite the call for demolition after five years), we continue to support the recommendations in the master plan that cite certain buildings as reusable, and encourage continued efforts to salvage and repurpose them. Also, to the extent that they can be identified and the costs are not prohibitive, measures to prevent further serious deterioration might be considered in the most appealing buildings, such as Newtown, Woodbury, Stratford and Plymouth.

#### **Undertake/Continue a comprehensive review of existing infrastructure.**

Most of the sewer and water supply lines are old and have not been maintained well over the years. It is recommended that the water, sewer, and storm drain lines along with other utilities continue to be mapped and evaluated. Recommendation for improvements should be inventoried. It is recommended that existing Town staff at the Public Works Department along with Land Use departments be used for this work. We do acknowledge that staff may need some consultant evaluation but this could be minimized by a detailed in house review.

In addition to the infrastructure within the campus property, we suggest that the town revisit the issue of access to the property, including both car and pedestrian. Pedestrian access to the property, especially from the high school, middle school, and Borough should be considered.

#### **Replace the Fairfield Hills Adaptive Reuse Zone with a finer-grained, use-based zoning map.**

Currently, the Master Plan designates 150 or more acres as an adaptive reuse zone. We believe that such broad-stroke zoning has been confusing for the citizens of Newtown. Instead, we recommend that specified uses be ascribed to particular areas in the campus. Some areas may be designated for a single purpose, while others may be designated for several. For example, one area may be identified as "Open Land" while another could be identified as "Town and Community Services" and/or "Community Culture and Arts". The latter area would then be targeted for one or the other use, or a blending of the two. Such zoning will better guide development in achieving a more cohesive character for the overall property. Should

development opportunities arise that fall outside of the noted uses for an area, such opportunities should be discussed pursuant to the process recommendations above.

The figure below includes a *hypothetical* map, illustrating what we mean by a use-based zoning approach. In the map, some areas are dedicated to a single use – for example, the East Meadow is solely designated as Conservation/Agriculture – while others support multiple uses – for example the West Meadow is designated for both Conservation/Agriculture and Culture/Arts. Again, those areas designated with multiple uses could be developed as a single use or as a blend of two or more of the designated uses. This map is intended only to clarify the concept, not to make specific recommendations.

## ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN ONLY

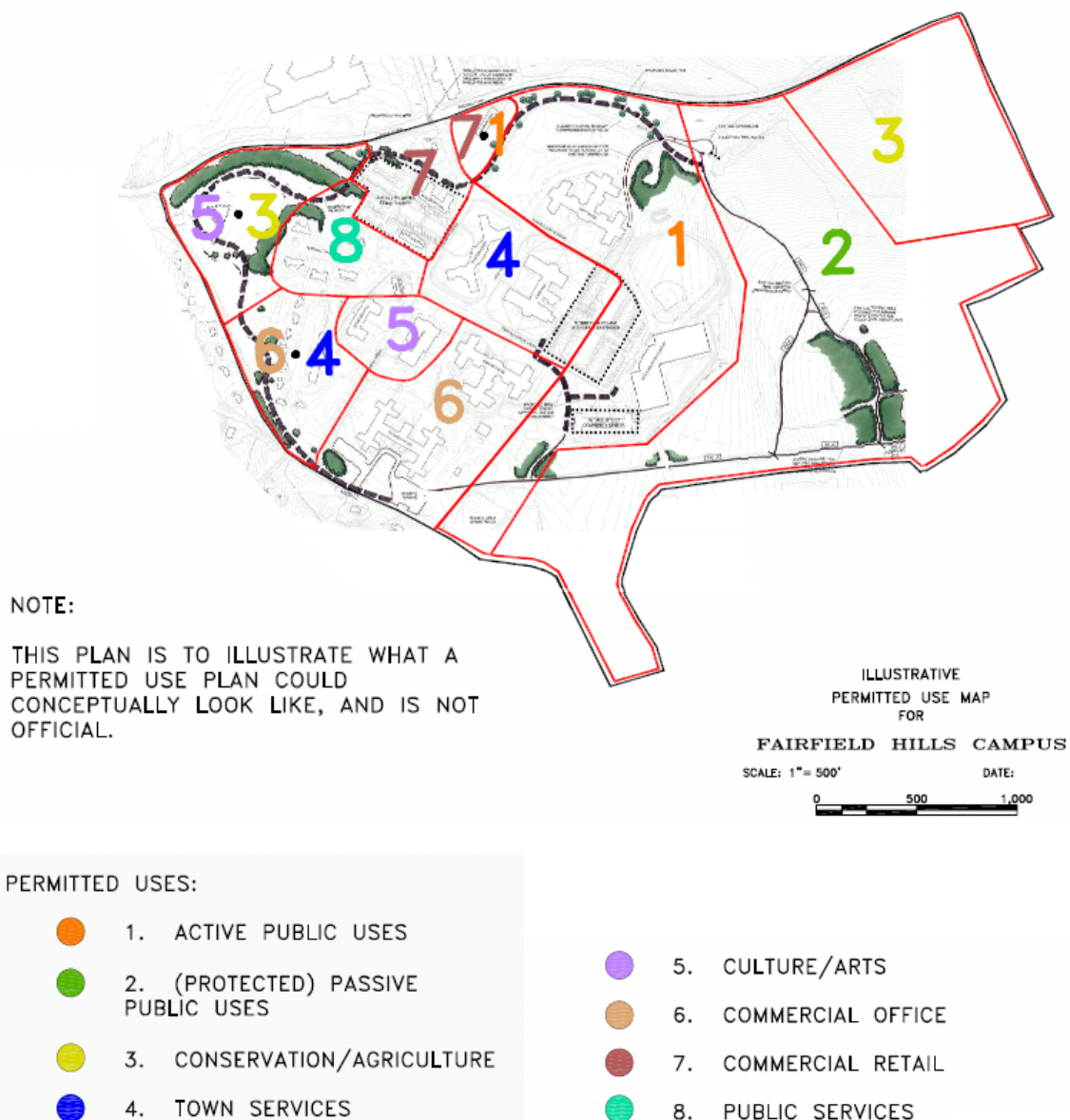


Figure 1

**Designate High Meadow as a protected area.**

The High Meadow is considered by many as the “crown jewel” of the property. It boasts spectacular views and an all-purpose trail system. We recommend that this area of campus be explicitly protected for public passive use, including trails, picnic areas, open fields, and potentially sheltered areas.

During our deliberations, we identified several rationales for actively protecting the High Meadow from development. While we recognize that the intent of the Master Plan was to keep most land open – at least for the near future, the lack of a formal designation of protection from development was confusing to the public, especially in light of the town’s policy to buy land to protect it from development. In addition, the High Meadow is considered the “crown jewel” of the property and so is a prime candidate for formally protecting from development. However, we felt strongly that the High Meadow should be cultivated as an outdoor destination for the town. We are concerned that an “Open Space” designation implies that it will be returned to its natural state, something that would impede the activities we see today. Instead, we chose to recommend “protected” as a way to maintain the paved trails and potentially add picnic areas and other resting/activity spots for visitors.

## ***2.4 Not Recommended for the Fairfield Hills Master Plan***

### **Housing**

At this time, there is very little support for housing on the Fairfield Hills property. While many of us on the committee believe that diversifying Newtown’s housing stock and encouraging sustainable residential development are critical issues for Newtown, we agree that supporting housing on the Fairfield Hills campus at this time is not in the best interests of the property or the community.

Housing was another topic that the committee spent a great deal of time discussing. We approached the discussion armed with our own beliefs about what is best for the town and with the results from the survey that provided a comprehensive community perspective on residential development as a component of growth for Newtown as a whole, as well as a potential feature of economic development at Fairfield Hills. As mentioned above, many of us agree that diversifying Newtown’s housing stock and encouraging sustainable residential development are critical issues for our town. In addition, several of us felt that housing could be the catalyst that would help bring vibrancy to the Fairfield Hills property.

However as we debated the issue, we became more convinced that opening the door to housing at this time could impact the overall character of the property in a way that is not supported by the public opinion we gathered both in our public engagement sessions and in the survey. While 65% of survey respondents were open to creating “a new ‘main street’ or ‘town center’ destination environment with combined restaurants, retail, and housing ...,” at most 22% supported any type of housing at Fairfield Hills. Given the heated nature of this topic, we wrote a separate [report](#) that goes into more detail. This report is available in Appendix A.

### **Education**

There is currently little support for dedicating land at Fairfield Hills for a potential school facility. Therefore, even though the last Master Plan explicitly called out educational uses, we recommend that such educational use be omitted in the revision. Should the need for an



educational facility emerge in the future, we highly recommend that alternate spaces and approaches be reviewed fully, prior to using land at Fairfield Hills.

However, supplemental educational uses at Fairfield Hills remain one of the top priorities in our Town. Education will be “woven in” to some degree in other areas, e.g. agricultural education is currently part of the open land use and we recommend that this continue and possibly be expanded. (The High School Greenery Program may have application at Fairfield Hills). There is value in including education as one of the future community needs at Fairfield Hills rather than as a separate issue as it is in the current Master Plan, which specifically suggests the Kent site for a High School academy. Education, along with other municipal uses, should be included in the discussion of “open land”; i.e. areas that will preserve some contiguous acres for possible future needs while encouraging non-permanent use at the present time.

### 3.0 Suggested Priorities

The Town has limited resources to dedicate to the development or removal of buildings on the campus. However we recommend that the following projects should continue to be included in the annual budget and CIP.

- 1) Focus on developing a town green (e.g., demolish Shelton and road between Shelton and the Municipal Center).
- 2) Investigate economic viability of a performing arts center / community arts (at Plymouth or elsewhere on the campus) including the impact to facilities at Edmond Town Hall and means for funding it.
- 3) Continued demolition of obsolete buildings

### 4.0 Concluding Remarks

Ownership of the Fairfield Hills campus provides the town with unique opportunities to manage development on the site. However with these opportunities come challenges. As is stated in the notes from the second Open Community Council, “This is NOT a homogeneous community... many people with many different perspectives, which makes it hard to figure out where to go from here.” Layer on top of that the residents’ desire for “urgency to see more significant progress” (65%) – the town is not in an easy position. However based on our work, we have discovered some key community perspectives that should help us move forward as a community:

- 1) Fairfield Hills should be a place that is generally open to Newtown residents.
- 2) There is broad support for a limited form of commercial development, provided it is in direct support of the activities available on the campus.
- 3) While many members of the community would like to see the buildings stay, when presented with information about the status of the buildings and cost for rehab, many understand that most of the buildings are best demolished.<sup>3</sup>
- 4) Housing should not be permitted on the property in any form.
- 5) We should craft a vision for the property, including one or more cohesive themes, that might serve to galvanize the development of the property.

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<sup>3</sup> This was seen during our first public engagement session, the Community Input Council, that was provided with the informational documents we wrote and with conversation amongst their members.

By having a vision we can begin to address the sense of urgency – even during these times of extreme financial constraints, as stated in the [notes](#) from the Community Input Council:

*Even if we are not able to create what we want at Fairfield Hills right away, having a clear focal point can be of value. ... Having a strong, compelling vision could help the town come together and make progress on the improvement of the property.*

Through our work, we've created a vision we feel will be well received by the residents of Newtown. We've highlighted five supportive uses, and several larger themes that could help bring the disparate preferences of the community together. In addition, we have produced nine additional recommendations based on our public engagement sessions, survey responses, and input from residents and workers across Newtown, as well as from our beliefs about what would make Fairfield Hills more vibrant for the community at large. We offer this work to you for your consideration when moving forward with the upcoming revision of the Master Plan.



## Appendix A: Perspective on Housing



# Fairfield Hills

Master Plan Review Committee

July 7, 2011

### **The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee's perspective on housing and residential development at the Fairfield Hills campus.**

At this time, the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee has finished its public input stage and is currently using the information to arrive at our final recommendations. Specific efforts in our public engagement process have included:

- ✓ A weekend-long Community Microcosm Council session
- ✓ 2 larger community-wide World Café discussion sessions
- ✓ A Web-based community discussion group utilizing a dedicated Facebook page
- ✓ A town-wide quantitative survey including a total of 1,041 respondents. Surveys were completed online and on paper.

As we near completion of our Master Plan review process, we have already discussed recommendations for potential uses and are currently talking about process and implementation recommendations. We have agreed that housing is not a recommended use for the property.

When we have completed all of our recommendations, we will be providing two documents: one that presents a high-level overview of our recommendations and another that delves more deeply into our process and deliberations. In our present draft of the overview document we state:

"At this time, there is very little support for housing on the Fairfield Hills property. While many of us on the committee believe that diversifying Newtown's housing stock and encouraging sustainable residential development are critical issues for Newtown, we agree that supporting housing on the Fairfield Hills campus at this time is not in the best interests of the property or the community."

Details of our deliberations for this decision will be available in our second document. However, much of the decision was based on the input from the "Future of Fairfield Hills" survey. Key highlights are summarized below followed by supporting results directly from the survey.

**Summary of results:** *The survey presented a comprehensive perspective on residential development as a component of growth for Newtown as a whole, as well as a potential element of economic development at Fairfield Hills.*

- ✓ *Single family homes and age-restricted housing/condos are supported by just over half of respondents, although no single housing option receives broad support for development in Newtown as a whole.*
- ✓ *However, even among those who indicate support for various housing options in Newtown as a whole, there is a clear lack enthusiasm for residential development – in any form -- at Fairfield Hills.*

The other major component of growth and development in Newtown is “*residential development*.” This can take several forms.

- Historically, Newtown’s residential growth has been predominantly in the form of single-family homes. Single-family homes have been the traditional core of Newtown’s rural/suburban, family-oriented community.
- As Newtown’s population continues to age, there is greater interest and desired for age-restricted housing or condos that allow our senior population to continue to live in Newtown after downsizing their homes, and reducing home maintenance and upkeep.
- Moreover, age-restricted housing that is also income-restricted allows residents on fixed incomes to stay in Newtown throughout their retirement. It also allows many younger residents to consider Newtown as a place where their own aging parents can come to live.
- Another form of housing is “affordable” or “incentive” housing (detailed earlier). This consists of income-restricted houses or condos made available to residents earning incomes between 60%-80% of the median Connecticut family income (to qualify as “affordable” housing) or the Danbury metropolitan family income (to qualify as “incentive” housing). Generally, this means that a qualifying family income would be \$50K-\$80K per year.

Q: Thinking about how residential development is currently taking place and how it could continue in the future, what types of development would you most and least like to see in **Newtown as a whole**? (Scale: would be great, would be ok, no opinion, would not be good, would be terrible)

Q: Thinking again about the types of economic development you’re open to for Newtown in general, which do you feel would be appropriate to **include on the Fairfield Hills campus**, if any?

How to read data:

55% of total respondents are open to residential development in the form of single-family homes in Newtown in general. Of this 55%, 46% indicate this should not occur at FFH, 9% feel it is appropriate to include on the FFH campus

	% Would be Great/OK to See This Kind of Development in Newtown in General		Whether Would Like Specifically at Fairfield Hills Campus	
	Total		Not at FFH	Yes at FFH
Residential development in the form of single-family houses	55%	46	9	
Residential development in the form of age restricted housing or condominiums	51%	29	22	
Residential development that diversifies the types of housing options in Newtown	41%	28	13	
Residential development in the form of age and income restricted housing or condominiums	40%	25	15	
Mixed-use residential buildings (apartments over offices/retail)	38%	21	17	
Residential development in the form of income restricted single-family housing (i.e., also known as 'affordable' or 'incentive' housing where a qualifying annual household income would be \$50,000-\$80,000)	36%	28	8	
Residential development in the form of condominium complexes	30%	18	12	
Residential development in the form of apartments available for rent	26%	13	13	
Residential development in the form of income restricted multi-family condominiums (i.e., also known as 'affordable' or 'incentive' housing where a qualifying annual household income would be \$50,000-\$80,000)	24%	16	8	

**Summary of results (cont'd):***Focusing on housing as an integrated component of FFH campus development:*

- ✓ *When a housing option is put in the context of “smart growth” that includes a residential component as part of more valued restaurant and retail options, there is an increase in appeal – but still only among a minority (43% agree strongly/somewhat that this should be included at FFH).*
- ✓ *A similar level of support is gained by creating a tangible vision of a main street or “town center” destination combining restaurants, retail and housing -- much like Ridgefield or West Hartford (45% are extremely/very favorable to having this at FFH)*
- ✓ *Yet, describing development as a mixed-use “neighborhood” with apartments over offices/retail, support drops to about one-quarter (26% are extremely/very favorable to having this at FFH).*
- ✓ *Similarly, framing development as a “planned community” with appropriately sized residential component results in only one-in-five respondents who are extremely/very favorable toward having this at FFH*

% Agree Strongly/Somewhat

- 43% Fairfield Hills development should include a residential component as a way to promote 'smart growth' for the property, and provide a permanent base of customers to support retail commercial development like a restaurant, coffee shop, or ice cream parlor
- 25% Fairfield Hills is an appropriate location to provide diversified housing options for middle class residents and families who may not otherwise be able to afford to live in Newtown

% Extremely/Very Favorable Toward Having at Fairfield Hills

- 45% Create a new 'main street' or 'town center' destination environment with combined restaurants, retail and housing, like what you'd find in towns like Ridgefield, Westport, Bethel, West Hartford, etc.
- 26% A destination featuring a mixed-use neighborhood (apartments over offices/retail, with performing arts theater, art gallery/museum)
- 20% A planned community with an appropriately sized residential component of condominiums, rental apartments, residential-over-retail, or some other residential format that the Newtown community agrees is appropriate for Fairfield Hills

## **Appendix B: Survey Results**

A presentation summarizing the results is attached below.



*Needs, Desires and Wishes of the  
Newtown Community Regarding the  
Future of Fairfield Hills*

June, 2011

**Harrison Group**

## Background and Study Methodology

- A key component of the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee's charge was to engage the Newtown community to better understand their needs, desires and wishes regarding development of the Fairfield Hills campus. As part of this effort, the Committee completed a town-wide quantitative survey
  - Quantitative survey represents the final stage in the public engagement process, which began with a weekend-long Community Microcosm Council session, followed by two larger community-wide World Café discussion sessions.
- A total of 1,041 interviews were completed among Newtown residents age 18+, between 5/6 and 5/29, 2011 (average survey length was 26 minutes)
- Surveys were completed online and on paper
  - Survey was publicized via The Newtown Bee, Newtown Patch, the FFHMPPRC's dedicated Facebook page (FFH Master Plan Opinion Page), as well as several hundred flyers distributed at central locations around Newtown. Paper surveys were also made available at the Senior Center and the Booth Library
- To ensure accurate representation, data was weighted to reflect known population proportions across key demographic dimensions

*Note: Survey programming, online hosting, paper survey production and data entry, data processing, and reporting was completed by the Harrison Group*



## Overview of Findings

- Broad support exists for continued responsible development of the Fairfield Hills campus. Top features of community and municipal uses include:
  - Active and passive recreation: a paved trail system for walking/jogging/biking, sports fields for baseball/softball/soccer/lacrosse
  - Town green with outdoor stage/gazebo/band shell for outdoor concerts in a park-like setting
  - Performing arts and cultural arts center
  - Community garden
  - Municipal services (i.e. police/emergency services, social services, etc.)
- Most agree that a core acreage of the campus should be dedicated to economic development as a way to help generate income for the town (preferable through leasing rather than selling land). Economic development should be relatively small in scale:
  - Local restaurants/coffee shop/ice cream/etc.
  - Small business/medical/professional services/local retail
- Many residents feel a growing urgency to make more significant progress on campus development-- but above all, there is a desire for ongoing community dialog to develop and publicly communicate a clear vision for future development themes
  - This vision can provide a filter by which to consider future development opportunities that may arise

# Consideration of Specific Types of Economic and Residential Development

*- For Newtown in General and Fairfield Hills Specifically -*



## Consideration of Specific Types of Economic Development for Newtown and For FFH Specifically

IN NEWTOWN  
AS A WHOLE

Across a wide-ranging list of potential economic development opportunities, respondents were asked to rate their interest in seeing each type of development take place in Newtown as a whole. Top themes enjoying broadest support include:

- ✓ Local restaurants, small food service, pub/tavern/lounge
- ✓ Local retail businesses
- ✓ Small corporate/business offices (<300 people), corporate suites for small businesses/medical/professional services
- ✓ Theater for performing arts, art gallery or museum

*Positive interest  
among  
two-thirds  
majority  
or more*

AT THE FFH CAMPUS  
SPECIFICALLY

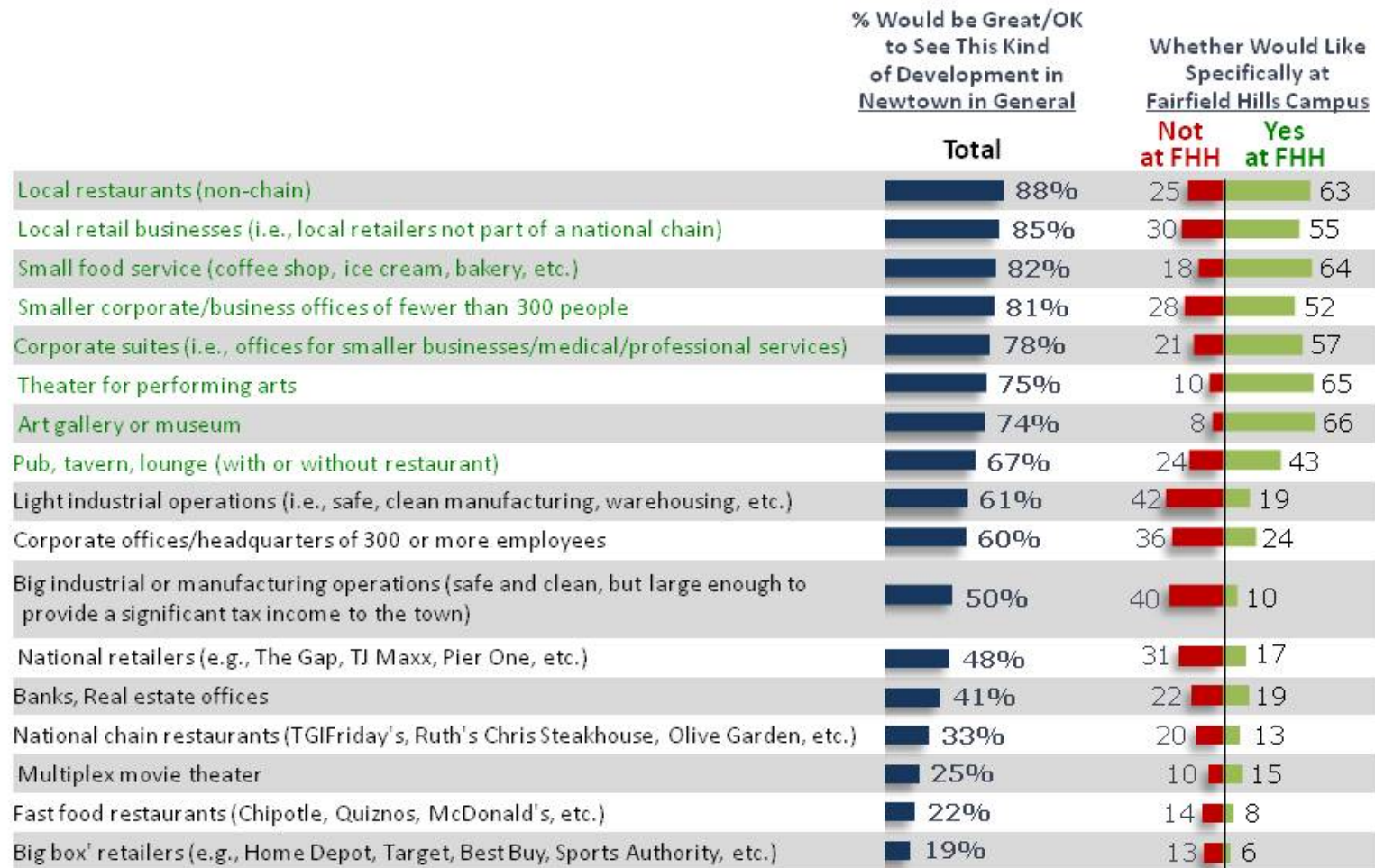
Respondents were then asked, among those ideas for which they indicated positive interest, which types of development should occur at the Fairfield Hills campus, specifically, and which should be limited to other areas of Newtown.

*Generally, the same areas that received broadest interest for Newtown as a whole also received widespread support for the Fairfield Hills campus, specifically.*

- ✓ Art gallery/museum (66%) of performing arts theater (65%)
- ✓ Small food service operations/coffee shop/ice cream/bakery/etc.(64%), and local restaurants (63%)
- ✓ Smaller business/medical/professional services (57%), corporate/business offices <300 people (52%)
- ✓ Local retail businesses -- not part of a national chain (55%)

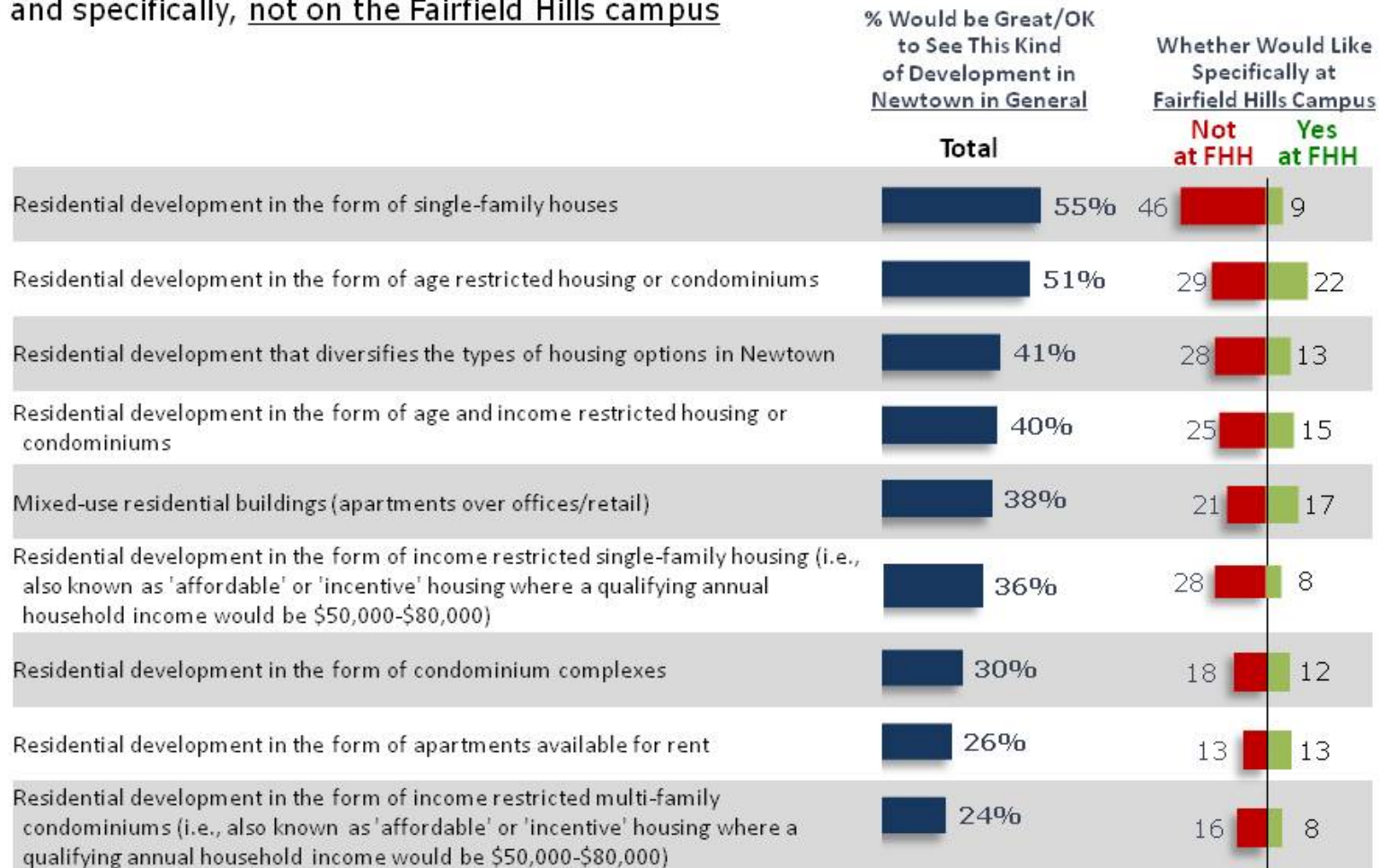
Lowest interest was reported for "big box" retailers, fast food/other national chain restaurants, big industrial/manufacturing operations, multiplex movie theater (lowest for development in Newtown and lowest for consideration at Fairfield Hills)

## Consideration of Specific Types of Economic Development for Newtown and For FFH Specifically



## Consideration of Specific Types of Residential Development for Newtown and For FFH Specifically

There is limited interest in residential development alternatives beyond single-family homes or age restricted housing for Newtown as a whole – and specifically, not on the Fairfield Hills campus



7

## Overall Attitudes Toward the Fairfield Hills Campus



## Consider development opportunities *after* an overall vision for the campus has been established and vetted by the public

Respondents indicate moderate support for a decision making structure that allows the town to act fast if opportunities for development arise at Fairfield Hills (49%).

Yet as was heard in the community discussion sessions, it is important to *first* engage the public and explain the vision and development themes that are being pursued

- Once there is public understanding and support for the mission and vision, fast action may be welcomed
- Worth noting, several comments heard in the community discussion sessions suggested there is not currently a widely known or agreed upon “vision” for the campus

It is important to develop a community dialog around a specific vision for the Fairfield Hills campus as a whole before major decisions are made to pursue individual opportunities for developing the campus



Our strategy for developing Fairfield Hills should allow fast action and pursuit of individual opportunities at Fairfield Hills as they become available



## Newtown community prefers that the town retain control/ownership of land through leasing rather than selling

A clear three-quarters majority prefer that the town retain control of land by leasing rather than selling land at Fairfield Hills, although a sizeable minority of residents understand and agree with the benefits of selling a parcel of land

- Notably, neither of these alternatives consider the level of interest among developers in the current market

It makes sense for the town to maintain control of the land by leasing the buildings and the land (rather than selling)



It makes sense to consider selling a parcel of land within Fairfield Hills for private commercial development, under strict zoning restrictions to control the future use of the commercial property. This seems like a good way to generate immediate income that can be used to help fund other initiatives on the campus



## Clear public support for economic development at FFH

A sizeable two-thirds majority feel that a core acreage of the campus should play a role in generating income to the town through economic development

- While not necessarily a universally held opinion, it is clearly a more popular perspective than dedicating the entire 186 acres to economic development, and much more desired than having the campus play little/no role in generating income for the town

A core 40+ acres of the Fairfield Hills campus should play a significant role in generating income to the town through economic development.



The entire 186 acres of the Fairfield Hills property should play a significant role in generating income to the town through economic development



The Fairfield Hills campus should not play a significant role in generating income to the town through economic development



## Broad support exists for the continued development of the Fairfield Hills campus

Even with the ongoing backdrop of a challenging economy, only a minority of respondents (42%) feel that spending money on Fairfield Hills at this time should not occur. And just one-in-ten suggest that the town should never have bothered buying the property

Spending money on Fairfield Hills, beyond what we're already obligated to pay, at this time makes little sense given other needs the town has



The town should never have bothered buying all that land at Fairfield Hills





## Educate the public on key realities – many buildings need to be taken down, it may take several years and many millions of dollars

As some members of the community phrased it, there is a sense of “Fairfield Hills Fatigue” emerging among many. Two-thirds feel an urgency to see more significant progress completed at a faster pace than currently perceived

- Moreover, few are comfortable with the prospect of seeing unused buildings sit empty for the next 5-10 years

There appears to be a need for continued public education regarding the current condition of many of the existing buildings on the campus (and market-based realities of potential renovation), as well as the timing and funds likely required for demolition

I sense a growing urgency for the town to hurry up and do something more significant with the Fairfield Hills campus



(% Agree Strongly/Somewhat)

I don't mind if the unused buildings at Fairfield Hills sit empty for the next 5-10 years



Many of the buildings populating Fairfield Hills are still a tremendous asset to the town and should be renovated



If the buildings on the Fairfield Hills campus aren't going to be used, they should all be demolished as soon as possible



## “Smart growth” and “diversified housing options” are terms that help to positively position housing at FFH, but garner little support

As shown earlier, there is very little public support for residential development on the Fairfield Hills campus. Yet, if a housing option is put in the context of “smart growth,” with a residential component as part of more desired restaurant and retail options, there is moderate interest – but still only among a minority (43% agree strongly/somewhat that this should be included at FFH)

When describing development as a mixed-use “neighborhood” with apartments over offices/retail, support drops to one-quarter (25% are extremely/very favorable to having this at FFH).

- Even among those who indicate support for various housing options in Newtown as a whole, there is a clear lack enthusiasm for residential development – in any form -- at Fairfield Hills (shown earlier)

Fairfield Hills development should include a residential component as a way to promote 'smart growth' for the property, and provide a permanent base of customers to support retail commercial development like a restaurant, coffee shop, or ice cream parlor



Fairfield Hills is an appropriate location to provide diversified housing options for middle class residents and families who may not otherwise be able to afford to live in Newtown



## General Attitudes Toward Fairfield Hills

### Other Top Attitudinal Themes

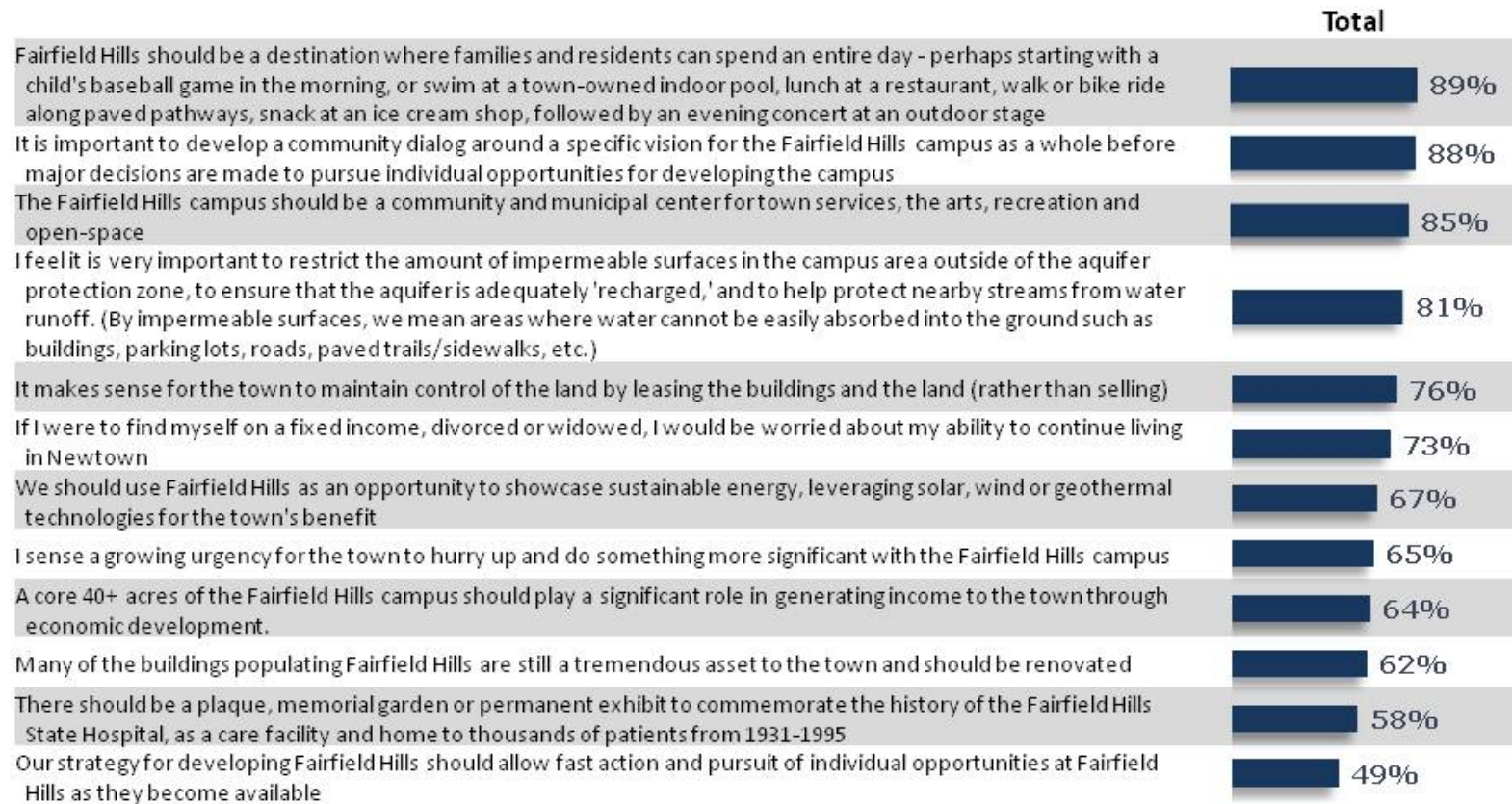
Overall attitudes regarding future FFH campus development reinforce the general themes that emerge throughout this report (and demonstrate consistency with many of the opinions and ideas heard during the community microcosm and group conversation sessions held prior to fielding the quantitative study):

- The campus should be a community and municipal center for town services, the arts, recreation and open-space, and ideally would serve as a destination where families and residents could spend an entire day (89% share this perspective).
  - Active and passive recreation, (team sports, hiking/biking, swimming), outdoor music/performing arts, supported by restaurant(s)
- Any development on the campus should include appropriate restriction of impermeable surfaces to help protect nearby aquifer recharge areas (81%)
- There is significant interest among two-thirds of respondents to use future development as a showcase for sustainable energy for the town's benefit (solar, wind, geothermal)
- A sizeable proportion of residents wish for a plaque or memorial garden someplace on the campus to honor the history of Fairfield Hills for its important role as a care facility and home to thousands of patients (58% agree)



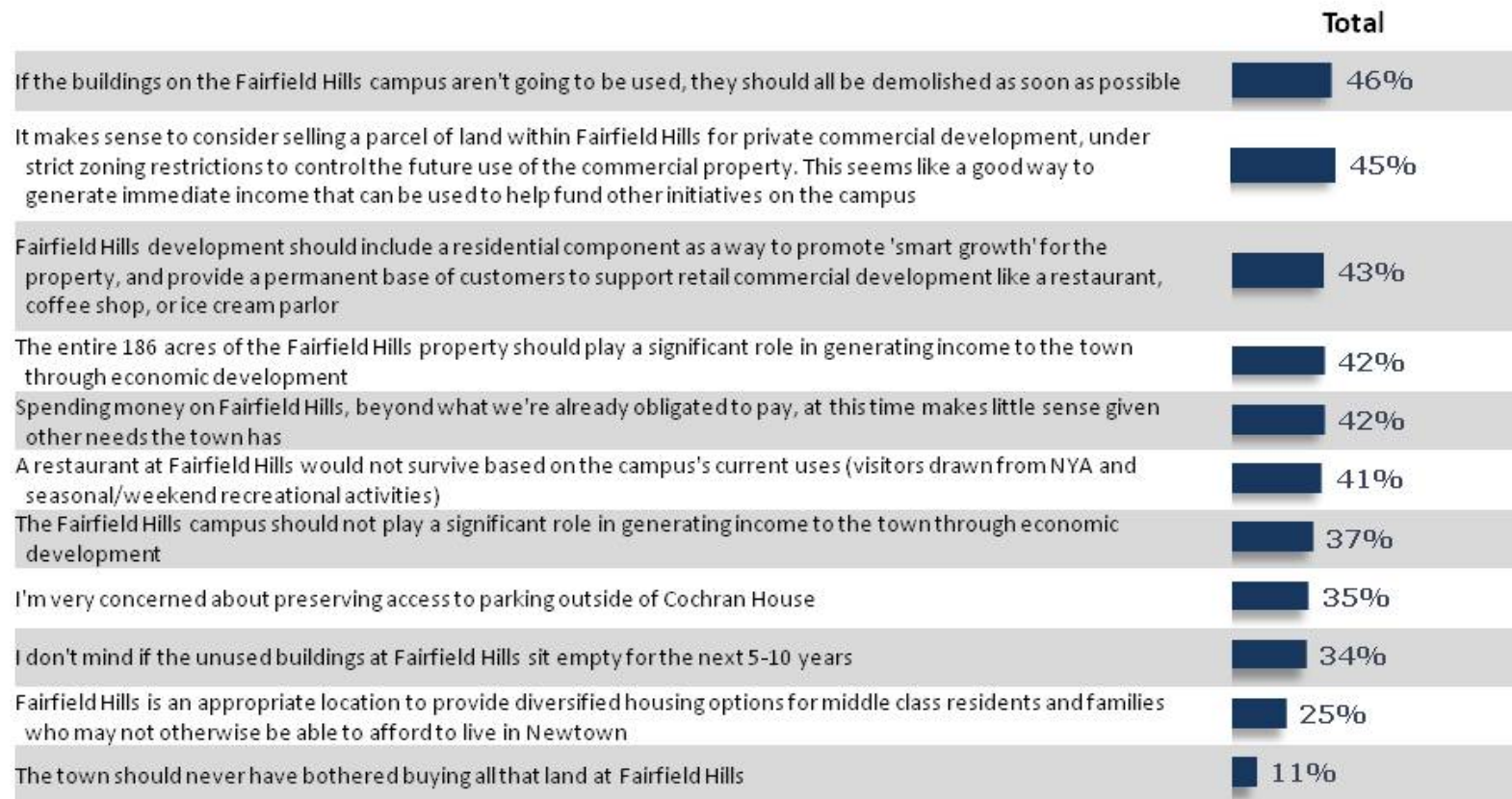
## Attitudes Toward Fairfield Hills Campus

(% Agree Strongly/Somewhat)



## Attitudes Toward Fairfield Hills Campus (cont'd)

(% Agree Strongly/Somewhat)

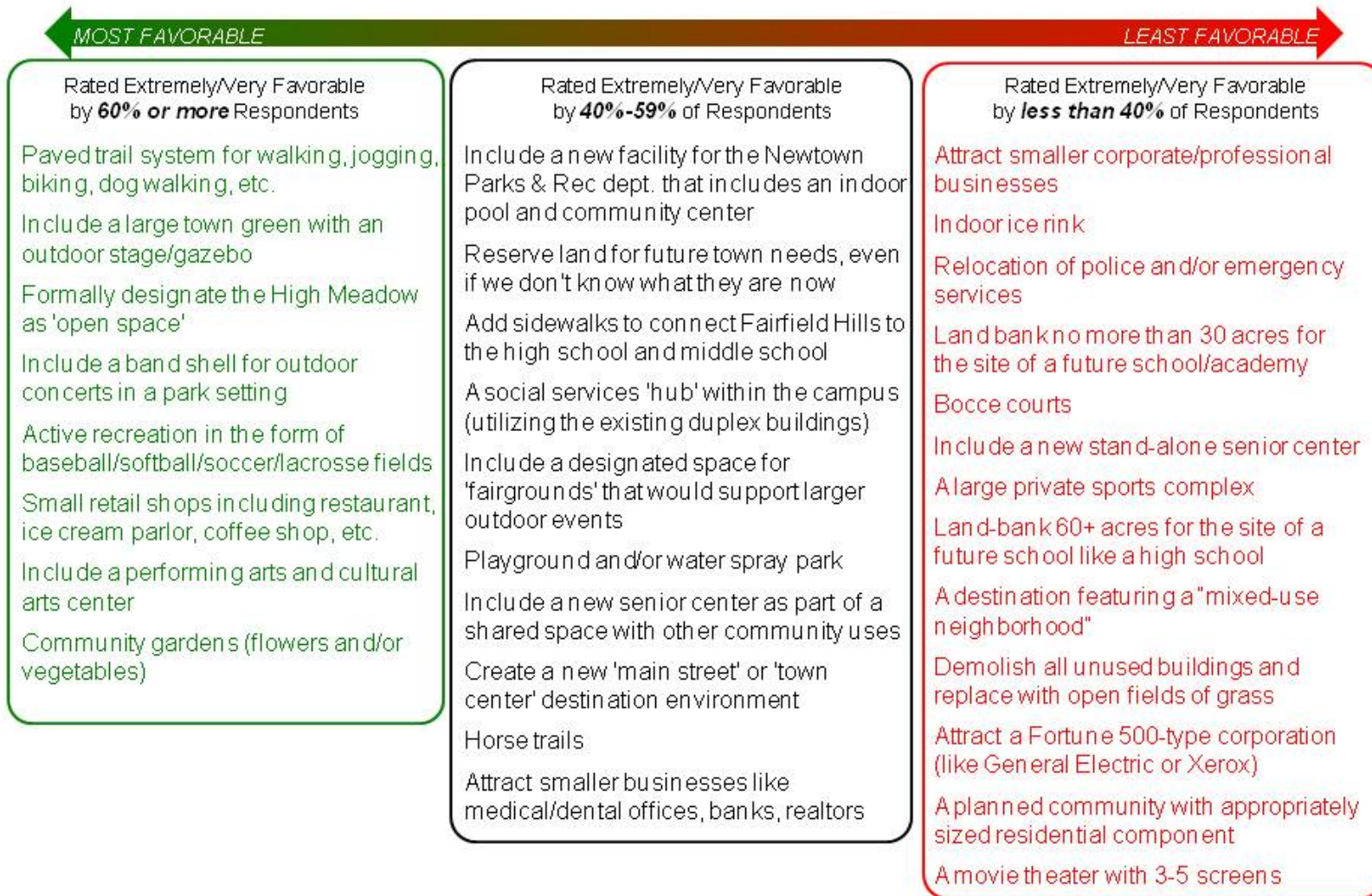


## Ratings of Individual Development Features



## Potential Features/Themes Would Like to See at FFH

Consider the following three-tiers of interest when planning future development at FFH



## Potential Features/Themes Would Like to See at FFH

(% Extremely/Very Favorable Toward Having at Fairfield Hills)

### Detailed descriptions and ratings for potential features/themes for development at FFH

- An important consideration when weighing options for development opportunities: although a hierarchy of top desires clearly emerges (summarized on the previous page), there are relatively few concepts that are rated truly “unfavorable”

	Ext/Very Favorable	Ext/Very/ Somewhat Favorable
Paved trail system for walking, jogging, biking, dog walking, etc.	80%	94%
Include a large town green with an outdoor stage/gazebo for outdoor activities and support for outdoor events like Relay for Life, farmer's market, etc.	76%	94%
Formally designate the High Meadow as 'open space' (grassy hill/open field where the paved trail is)	69%	90%
Include a band shell for outdoor concerts in a park setting	66%	90%
Active recreation in the form of baseball/softball/soccer/lacrosse fields	64%	88%
Small retail shops including restaurant, ice cream parlor, coffee shop, etc. - all ancillary businesses to service recreational activities	63%	86%
Include a performing arts and cultural arts center to hold, music and dance performances, art exhibits, etc.	63%	88%
Community gardens (flowers and/or vegetables)	62%	85%
Include a new facility for the Newtown Parks & Rec dept. that includes an indoor pool and community center	58%	83%
Reserve (land-bank) land for future town needs, even if we don't know what they are now	56%	85%
Add sidewalks to connect Fairfield Hills to the high school and middle school	55%	76%
A social services 'hub' within the campus (utilizing the existing duplex buildings) to support organizations like Kevin's Community Center, Newtown Youth & Family Services, or Newtown Social Services	54%	85%
Include a designated space for 'fairgrounds' that would support larger outdoor events like arts festivals and carnivals	52%	80%
Playground and/or water spray park for kids	49%	77%
Include a new senior center as part of a shared space with other community uses (arts, recreation, etc.)	46%	76%



## Potential Features/Themes Would Like to See at FFH (cont'd)

(% Extremely/Very Favorable Toward Having at Fairfield Hills)

	Ext/Very Favorable	Ext/Very/ Somewhat Favorable
Create a new 'main street' or 'town center' destination environment with combined restaurants, retail and housing, like what you'd find in towns like Ridgefield, Westport, Bethel, West Hartford, etc.	45%	65%
Horse trails	42%	67%
Include new construction or renovations to attract smaller businesses like medical/dental offices, banks, realtors, etc.	41%	68%
Include new construction to attract smaller corporate/professional businesses	38%	66%
Indoor ice rink	33%	59%
Relocation of police and/or emergency services	33%	64%
Reserve (land-bank) no more than 30 acres for the site of a future school like a middle school or school academy	32%	62%
Bocce courts	32%	64%
Include a new stand-alone senior center	32%	67%
A large private sports complex with amenities such as batting cages, golf driving range, indoor climbing wall, turf fields for indoor soccer/lacrosse/football/baseball/softball practices, etc.	31%	60%
Reserve (land-bank) 60+ acres for the site of a future school like a high school	27%	51%
A destination featuring a mixed-use neighborhood (apartments over offices/retail, with performing arts theater, art gallery/museum)	26%	47%
Demolish all unused buildings and replace with open fields of grass	26%	51%
Develop new professional buildings to attract a Fortune 500-type corporation (like General Electric or Xerox)	22%	40%
A planned community with an appropriately sized residential component of condominiums, rental apartments, residential-over-retail, or some other residential format that the Newtown community agrees is appropriate for Fairfield Hills	20%	35%
A movie theater with 3-5 screens	19%	36%

# Evaluation of Potential Development Themes

## Evaluation of Potential Development Themes

- At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were shown a series of six comprehensive visions and scenarios describing the potential development of the Fairfield Hills campus.
- Vision descriptions were presented as purely hypothetical scenarios based on the combination of many of the items that had been rated throughout the survey.

*Detailed description of themes included in Appendix*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ✓ Focus on a Central Park and Community Recreation             | ✓ Focus on a Town Green and Commercially Active "Downtown"  |
| ✓ Focus on Local Municipal and Community Needs                 | ✓ Focus on Substantial Economic Development While Preserving Recreational Use                         |
| ✓ Focus on Becoming a Regional Recreation and Arts Destination | ✓ Focus on Letting Future Generations Develop the Campus, While Mitigating Immediate Financial Burden |

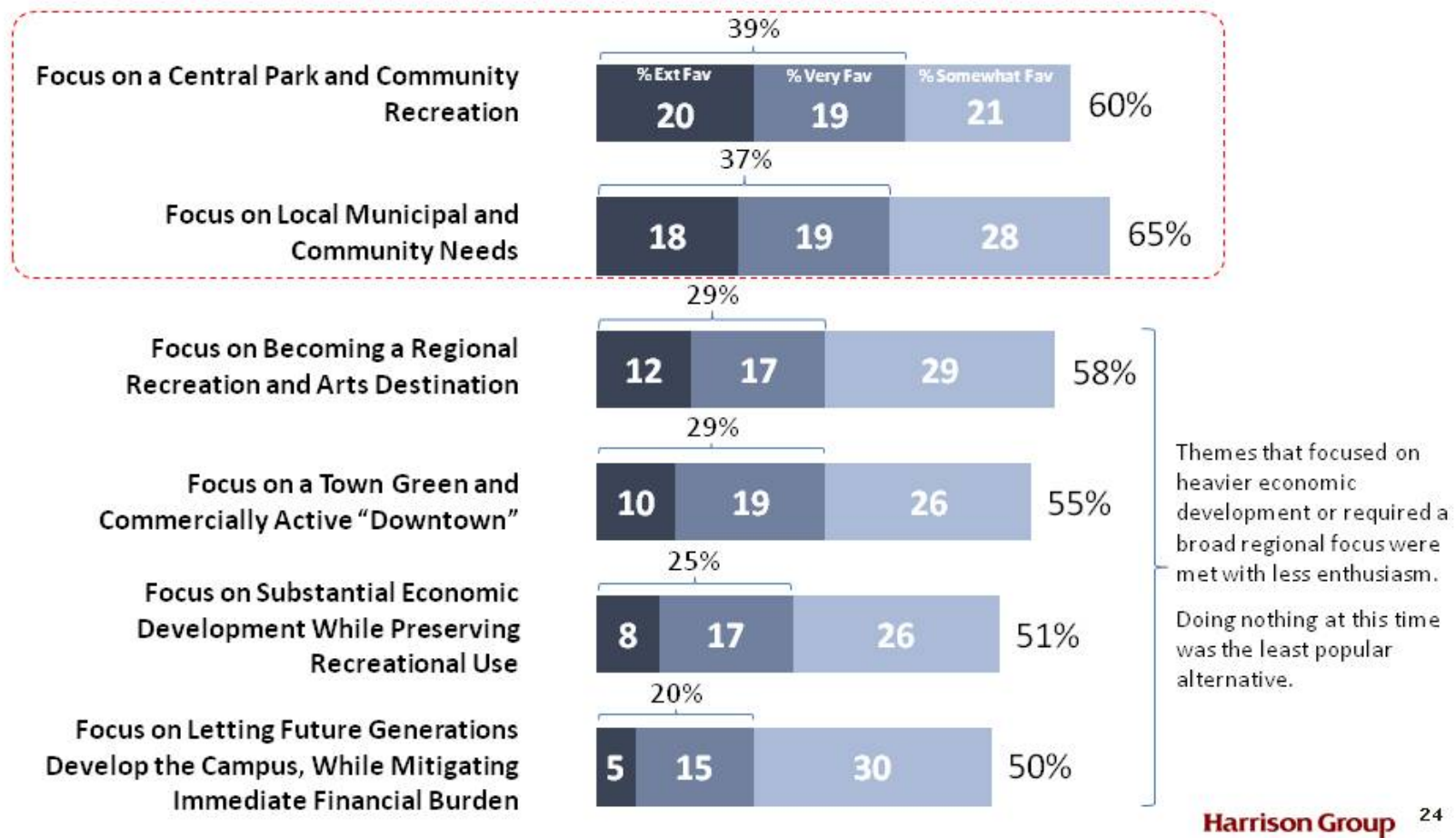
- Each vision/scenario was rated based on respondents' overall perception of favorability.

I feel extremely favorable toward this vision of the Fairfield Hills campus  
 I feel very favorable toward this vision of the campus  
 I feel somewhat favorable toward this vision of the campus  
 I feel somewhat unfavorable toward this vision of the campus  
 I feel very unfavorable toward this vision of the campus  
 I feel extremely unfavorable toward this vision of the Fairfield Hills campus  
 I have no opinion on this

## Favorability Toward Potential Development Themes

(% Extremely/Very/Somewhat Favorable)

- Two visions/themes emerge as the most favorable options – focusing on “a central park and community recreation” and “local municipal and community needs.”
- The two themes share commonalities but also offer a few unique elements (see next page)





## Focus on Top 2 Potential Development Themes

- Looking across the two top-preferred visions for development ("Central Park" and "Municipal/Community Needs"), there are 3-4 distinctive points that make each one unique, and five points that are shared in common between them
- Across these two top themes, the majority of respondents who like either one are actually favorable toward both ideas (62%-65% are extremely/very favorable toward both).
  - And looking more broadly, 85% are at least "somewhat" favorable toward both (not shown below)

### Focus on a Central Park and Community Recreation

#### Unique Features

- The Campus should be developed with a primary focus on the objective of creating a "Central Park" for Newtown. It should include complete demolition of the existing unused buildings, and substantial open space inclusive of both recreational sports fields for community use as well as passive recreation.
- Include an outdoor stage/pavilion for concerts in a park-like setting
- Include agricultural areas, e.g., community gardens, etc.

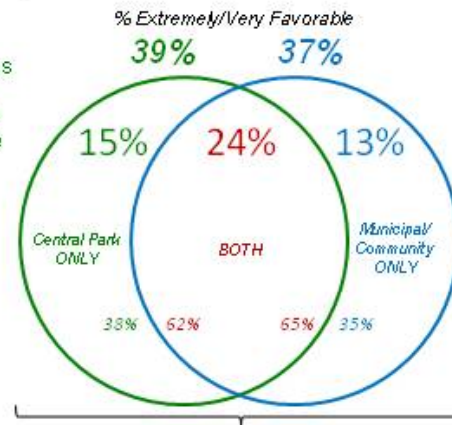
#### Common Features

- There would be no significant commercial development on the campus, other than small retail/restaurant businesses that would support the recreational activities taking place on campus.
- Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
- Protecting the Aquifer.
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

### Focus on Local Municipal and Community Needs

#### Unique Features

- Selected areas within the entry plaza portion of the Campus (i.e., Woodbury and Newtown Halls) and along Mile Hill South should be used/renovated for town uses, e.g., Police Station, Social Services, Emergency services, etc., or smaller economic development to support the Campus community.
- Areas designated to support community programs, e.g., outdoor events, local performances, community gardens, etc.
- Include a cultural and performing arts center to hold music and dance performances, art exhibits, etc.
- Land bank property for potential future school uses (e.g., a new middle school, high school or school academy)



## Recommended Synthesis of Top Themes/Visions

- Learning from this research can be brought to bear on creation of a new, revised vision based on the combined offerings of the two top themes... a "Central Park that Supports Local Municipal and Community Needs"
- Draws upon several of the most favorable features rated earlier (✓), leverages a top attitude relating to impermeable surfaces, and eliminates one component rated in the bottom tier of less favorable potential features (land bank for future school)

- ✓ The Campus should be developed with a primary focus on creating a "Central Park" for Newtown. It should include complete demolition of the existing unused buildings, and substantial open space inclusive of both recreational sports fields for community use as well as passive recreation.
- Selected areas within the entry plaza portion of the Campus (i.e., Woodbury and Newtown Halls) and along Mile Hill South should be used/renovated for town uses, e.g., Police Station, Social Services, Emergency services, etc., or smaller economic development to support the Campus community.
- ✓ Include an outdoor stage/pavilion for concerts in a park-like setting
- Include areas designated to support community programs, e.g., outdoor events, local performances,, etc.
- ✓ Include a cultural and performing arts center to hold music and dance performances, art exhibits, etc.
- ✓ Include agricultural areas, e.g., community gardens, etc.
- ✓ There would be no significant commercial development on the campus, other than small retail/restaurant businesses that would support the recreational activities taking place on campus.
- ✓ Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
- Protecting the Aquifer:
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

Top-tier  
Attitude/  
Desire



# *Appendix*

## *Respondent Profiles*

## Ingoing Level of Knowledge/Involvement with Fairfield Hills

Close to half of respondents (46%) consider themselves “very or fairly well” informed regarding current plans for Fairfield Hills

- Another four-in-ten report a general understanding, having heard some details over time
- 14% admit they know don’t know much at all about current plans regarding Fairfield Hills



## Demographics

### Gender

Total  
(n=1041)



52%

48%

### Age

Total  
(n=1041)

<24	5
25-59	48
50-64	31
65+	16
<i>Mean</i>	<i>50 yrs old</i>

### Employment Status

Total  
(n=1041)

<b>Employed NET</b>	<b>69</b>
Work full-time	59
Work part-time	10
<b>Unemployed NET</b>	<b>7</b>
Temporarily unemployed	4
Not working	2
<b>Other Not In Workforce NET</b>	<b>24</b>
Retired	12
Homemaker	8
Student	4

### What is the last level of education you completed?

Total  
(n=1041)

High School or Less	10
Some College	22
Technical/ vocational school	1
One to three years of college	21
<b>Four Year College or More</b>	<b>67</b>
Four year college graduate	31
Graduate work	11
Graduate degree	25
Would rather not say	1

### Years Living in Newtown

Total  
(n=1041)

<10	21
10-19	31
20-30	17
30+	22
Born Here	9
<i>Mean</i>	<i>22 yrs.</i>

### Current Marital Status?

Total  
(n=1041)

<b>Married</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Not Married NET</b>	<b>25</b>
Single, never married	12
Living together as a couple	2
Widowed	3
Divorced	7
Other	1

Data was weighted to reflect real-world population figures based on US Census and CERC Town Profile data

## Demographics (Cont'd)

### Whether have children <18 Living in Household

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
Yes (mean: 2.1 kids in HH)	47
No	52
Would rather not say	1

### Number of Children by Age Groups Living in Household

	<u>Total</u> (n=489)
Ages <5	0.3
Ages 5-9	0.6
Ages 10-12	0.5
Ages 13-17	0.9

### Whether Children Enrolled in Newtown Public Schools

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
Yes	42
NO NET	58
No. Have in the past, but no longer do -- child/children have finished their primary and secondary schooling	31
No. Have children in private schools as an alternative to Newtown public schools	6
No. Have never had school-age children in Newtown	21

### Ethnicity

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
White or Caucasian	93
African American or Caribbean American	1
Asian or Pacific Islander	1
Hispanic	4
Other	1

### Total HH Income

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
<50K NET	12
Less than \$30,000	3
\$30,000 to \$39,999	3
\$40,000 to \$49,999	6
\$50,000 to \$75,000	11
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13
200K+ NET	19
\$200,000 to \$249,999	9
\$250,000 to \$499,999	7
\$500,000 or more	3
Would rather not say, even though my response will remain confidential	18
Median	\$118,000

Data was weighted to reflect real-world population figures based on US Census and CERC Town Profile data

## Demographics (Cont'd)

### Where do you work?

	<u>Total</u> (n=718)
<b>Work in Newtown (NET)</b>	<b>43</b>
In Newtown (other than my own home)	29
Out of my own home office	14
A local surrounding town (Danbury, Brookfield, Bethel, New Milford, Shelton, etc.)	22
Lower Fairfield County	14
Waterbury, Bridgeport, New Haven or Hartford areas	6
Somewhere else in Connecticut	3
Westchester County, NY	3
New York City	3
Some other town/city outside of Newtown	5

### Whether Live in Newtown

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
<b>YES NET</b>	<b>100</b>
Yes, currently live in Newtown	98
Yes, but currently away at school	2
No, but have lived in Newtown in the past	0
Currently work in Newtown, but don't live here	-
Do not live or work in Newtown	-

### Whether a Registered Voter in Newtown?

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
<b>Yes</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>No / Not Sure NET</b>	<b>5</b>
No	4
Not sure/Rather not say	1

### How long plan to continue living in Newtown

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
2-3 years	4
5 years or so	7
10-15 years	22
20 years or so	10
30 years or so	3
I hope to stay here indefinitely/retire here	42
Not sure / Too hard to say	13
<b>Mean</b>	<b>15 yrs.</b>

### Whether Currently Pay Taxes in Newtown

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
<b>Yes</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>No/ Not Sure NET</b>	<b>4</b>
No	3
Not sure/Rather not say	1

### Whether Voted on 4/26

	<u>Total</u> (n=1041)
<b>Voted (NET)</b>	<b>65</b>
Voted Yes	31
Voted No	32
Voted, but would rather not say whether voted Yes or No	2
<b>I did not vote on April 26th for the 2011/2012 Town Budget</b>	<b>21</b>
I would rather not say	14

Data was weighted to reflect real-world population figures based on US Census and CERC Town Profile data



## Detailed Description of Development Themes

### ***Focus on a Central Park and Community Recreation***

- The Campus should be developed with a primary focus on the objective of creating a "Central Park" for Newtown. It should include complete demolition of the existing unused buildings, and substantial open space inclusive of both recreational sports fields for community use as well as passive recreation.
- Include an outdoor stage/pavilion for concerts in a park-like setting
- Include agricultural areas, e.g., community gardens, etc.
- There would be no significant commercial development on the campus, other than small retail/restaurant businesses that would support the recreational activities taking place on campus.
- Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
- Protecting the Aquifer.
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

### ***Focus on Local Municipal and Community Needs***

- The Campus should contain a substantial open space component inclusive of both active playing fields and passive recreation.
- Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
- Selected areas within the entry plaza portion of the Campus (i.e., Woodbury and Newtown Halls) and along Mile Hill South should be used/renovated for town uses, e.g., Police Station, Social Services, Emergency services, etc., or smaller economic development to support the Campus community.
- Areas designated to support community programs, e.g., outdoor events, local performances, community gardens, etc.
- Include a cultural and performing arts center to hold music and dance performances, art exhibits, etc.
- Land bank property for potential future school uses (e.g., a new middle school, high school or school academy)
- There would be no significant commercial development on the campus, other than small retail/restaurant businesses that would support the recreational activities taking place on campus.
- Protecting the Aquifer.
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

Unique components of each scenario are highlighted in BLUE.



## Detailed Description of Development Themes

### ***Focus on Becoming a Regional Recreation and Arts Destination***

- The Campus would have a primary focus on development that would draw a regional audience, for example an ice rink / sports and recreation activity center, performing arts theater to draw national/regional touring acts, facilities to support local/regional dance and visual arts students, etc.
- The Campus should contain an open space component inclusive of both recreational sports fields for community use as well as passive recreation.
- There could be significant commercial development in the core campus focused on providing related services to a regional audience.
- Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
- Protecting the Aquifer
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
  - If necessary to complete campus development, the amount of impermeable surfaces might be expanded through the use of appropriate abatement technologies and methods.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

### ***Focus on a Town Green and Commercially Active "Downtown"***

- The Campus should be developed with a primary focus on the objective of creating a "Town Green" including an outdoor stage/pavilion for concerts in a park-like setting.
- Surrounding this town green/open space would be a mixed-use development of residential apartments/condos over retail/restaurants/small businesses (similar to New Milford, Ridgefield, West Hartford).
- There would be no significant commercial development on the campus, other than small retail/restaurant businesses that would make up the "downtown" community environment.
- It would include substantial open space inclusive of both recreational sports fields for community use as well as passive recreation. Also includes complete demolition of the existing unused buildings.
- Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
- Protecting the Aquifer
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
  - If necessary to complete campus development, the amount of impermeable surfaces might be expanded through the use of appropriate abatement technologies and methods.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

Unique components of each scenario are highlighted in BLUE.

## Detailed Description of Development Themes

### ***Focus on Substantial Economic Development While Preserving Recreational Use***

- The Campus would have a primary focus on development that would draw a regional audience, for example an ice rink/ sports and recreation activity center, performing arts theater to draw national/regional touring acts, facilities to support local/regional dance and visual arts students, etc.
- The Campus should contain a substantial open space component inclusive of both active playing fields and passive open space.
  - Provide a complete paved trail system encircling the core campus.
  - Include an outdoor stage/pavilion for concerts in a park-like setting
- A parallel objective would be to encourage substantial economic development with the goal of providing a significant role in generating income to the town
  - A central area of the Campus could be reserved for revenue generating economic development activities compatible with other uses and the surrounding area (as defined by zoning regulations). Intent would be to provide a revenue stream to the town to help reduce the overall financial burden of the Campus.
    - May require demolition of many existing buildings to encourage new investment in economic development
  - If necessary to encourage the level of economic development envisioned, a parcel of property within the campus could be sold to a private developer (under strict zoning restrictions to control the future use of the commercial property). The sale of property would generate immediate income that can be used to help fund other initiatives on the campus
- Selected structures within the entry plaza portion of the Campus (i.e., Woodbury and Newtown Halls) should be renovated for economic development activity, such as small professional offices.
- Protecting the Aquifer
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
  - If necessary to complete campus development, the amount of impermeable surfaces might be expanded through the use of appropriate abatement technologies and methods.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.

## Detailed Description of Development Themes

### ***Focus on Letting Future Generations Develop the Campus, While Mitigating Immediate Financial Burden***

- The Campus should contain a substantial open space component inclusive of both active playing fields and passive recreation. These fields can be constructed in a sequence and within a schedule to meet the priorities of the Parks and Recreation Commission and users as well as coordination with other demolition and construction activities proposed in the Master Plan.
- Selected structures within the entry plaza portion of the Campus (i.e., Woodbury and Newtown Halls) should be renovated for economic development activity, such as small professional offices.
- A central area of the Campus could be reserved for revenue generating economic development activities compatible with other uses and the surrounding area (as defined by zoning regulations). Intent would be to provide a revenue stream to the town to help reduce the overall financial burden of the Campus.
  - May require demolition of many existing buildings over time to encourage new investment in economic development.
- Land bank property for potential future school uses (e.g., a new middle school, high school or school academy).
- Protecting the Aquifer.
  - Restrict the amount of impermeable surfaces in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately "recharged." Therefore, emphasis is placed on shared parking lots where possible in order to fully utilize existing impenetrable surfaces.
- Provide needed road modifications / parking / utilities to support the above.



## About The Harrison Group

The Harrison Group is a strategic marketing consulting and research services firm. We partner with clients to build substantial, profitable growth through superior marketing consulting and research.

We form lasting client relationships with some of the top brands and companies in the world.

Our core strengths have been successfully employed across consumer and business-to-business research engagements in more than 60 countries around the globe.

We are a cohesive team of researchers, analysts, field experts, focus group facilitators, marketing experts, brand specialists and multivariate statisticians who have all specialized in the business of clear, definitive results. Members of our team have served in senior marketing and research positions with McKinsey & Company, Yankelovich, Yahoo!, Ernst & Young, Edelman, MaPS and many of America's leading marketing corporations.



## Appendix C: Public Engagement Details

The public engagement aspect of the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee has been comprised of three basic components: an initial Microcosm Council and two subsequent Open Community Conversations. These informed the design of the town-wide survey described in Appendix B above.

### **Initial Microcosm Council – March 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>**

The initial microcosm council consisted initially of 18 town voters, 16 of whom stayed for the entire two-day process. Invitations were extended to potential participants whose names had been chosen by random selection from the voter rolls. The intention was to obtain a wide cross-section of the community. Members of the Review Committee made a total of about 400 phone calls to enlist the participants.

The various reports created by members of the Review Committee (see Appendix D) were used as briefing materials and served as input for the work of the microcosm council. Participants reported that the format used for the meeting was a helpful way for them to begin to understand the complexities involved with regard to Fairfield Hills. [Notes](#) are available below.

### **Open Community Conversation #1 – March 16<sup>th</sup>**

The Outcome Statement of the Microcosm Council was presented as input for the first Open Community Conversation, a 2.5-hour evening meeting on March 16<sup>th</sup> to which the entire community was invited. We had about 50 participants in attendance. After an initial presentation of the outcomes of the Microcosm Council, participants worked in small groups to discuss their own responses to this input. The small groups were “shuffled” every 20 minutes or so, so that participants would have the opportunity to engage in small-group conversation with a variety of others.

This was followed by a large-group conversation, during which participants offered input and fleshed out some additional scenarios. In addition, they volunteered a number of ideas for immediate improvements regarding Fairfield Hills – improvements that do not require sizable amounts of funds.

The [notes](#) from both the large-group and small-group conversations were synthesized and included below.

### **Open Community Conversation #2 – March 30<sup>th</sup>**

For the OCC #2, we followed a similar format the OCC #1. After a brief initial presentation, participants worked in small groups, followed by a whole-group conversation. The [notes](#) are available below.



**Fairfield Hills Community Input Council:****Draft Outcomes****Points of agreement and points of divergence**

- 1) We need to take a new, fresh look at the Master Plan, given that we are now in a different context and a different time, in part due to the economic crisis.
- 2) We want to encourage the town to take down the buildings that need dismantling as soon as possible, since the cost of doing so is likely to go up significantly the more we wait. Taking more buildings down can make the site more attractive to developers, should we choose to go that route. It can also serve as a sign of progress and provide a ray of hope that things are starting to happen. This could help counter the “Fairfield Hills fatigue” that has been setting in.
- 3) At the same time, we acknowledge that seeing the old buildings come down will also be a sad day for many people. We may need to mourn our losses, including the 10+ years of neglect of the buildings that has contributed to the need to bring them down.
- 4) We do not want to get bogged down in the past. At the same time, we feel that it is important to make the history clear, including an accounting of moneys spent thus far, in order to help us all move forward.
- 5) We also want to learn useful lessons from the past. This includes acknowledging that at times there has not been enough due diligence. Also, that many negative surprises were encountered in the remediation and demolition processes that have occurred to date.
- 6) As a council, we agreed on the main priorities for the future of Fairfield Hills, of having a “core” that serves as a cultural destination and/or a sports recreational destination, with other additional uses as well. We greatly appreciate the work that the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee has done thus far, and we want to encourage them to look at the Master Plan, with these two principal areas in mind.
- 7) One area of divergence is the SCALE of the “destination” Fairfield Hills should be. While we agree on culture and recreation as the two main themes, some of us would like for these to be primarily municipal destinations (a community cultural center and an indoor recreational facility) with residents of other areas welcome as well. In contrast, others of us favor a larger, regional-scale theatre or sports arena at Fairfield Hills, which would generate even greater revenue for the town as a whole. Please see the various scenarios that were generated, for greater detail on the various options that we envisioned.
- 8) We agree that we do NOT want certain kinds of large-scale commercial development at Fairfield Hills: no box stores, industrial, or manufacturing uses. We also welcome the possibility of small-scale niche businesses that fit in with the larger vision; for example, restaurants to serve the clientele of a community cultural center or a community sports center; a horse boarding stable; leasing agricultural land to a Community-Supported Agriculture venture; a “farm team” for the baseball field; and other such small-scale commercial ventures that would fit in with the larger vision of Fairfield Hills as a community center.

9) We did not reach any agreements as to whether there should be housing at Fairfield Hills, and if so, what kind of housing. However, we did all agree that the town needs to engage in a town-wide evaluation of housing needs and housing development opportunities, as well as a town-wide evaluation of commercial needs and commercial development opportunities, so that we are not looking at Fairfield Hills in isolation from the rest of the town, but instead engage in a more holistic and comprehensive approach.

10) While we agree on the need to take down the buildings, we do not necessarily agree on strategies for doing so. We identified at least five potential strategies, as well as some benefits and burdens of each:

- a) Have the town finance all of the necessary demolition. Concerns include that this could be a hard sell to voters for economic reasons, given its effect on the debt load to the town, and the fact that there are other areas that we need to be investing in as well.
- b) Continue to seek developers who will fund part of the demolition. Concerns include that we would still be paying for this, as we would need to offer a developer a reduced price; also, a development project could have hidden costs in terms of increased town services. There was also a concern that if a developer is not found, we will have to do it ourselves anyway, at a higher future cost.
- c) Selling a small portion of the land outright, in order to fund the demolition and the community vision for the larger remaining portion. Challenges include that this could severely limit any control over the portion of land that is sold, although it would still be subject to zoning regulations.
- d) Re-allocating funds that are currently earmarked for other projects. Challenges include the political difficulties of striking a balance between different needs.
- e) Explore innovative options, such as public-private partnerships and obtaining grant funds. Challenges include that even with public-private partnerships, or public- non-profit partnerships, the town could still end up paying a considerable sum for the demolition.

11) We did not reach agreement on whether outside developers should be brought in or not. On one side of the coin, concerns were expressed about the town having the needed expertise to manage a project of this size. On the other side of the coin, concerns were expressed about all the “hidden costs” that are often involved when a developer is brought in. It was also pointed out that expertise is needed to work effectively with developers, in order to prevent waste and “give-aways”. We agreed that in the best of all worlds, the benefits to the developer would coincide with the benefits to the town.

12) Even if we are not able to create what we want at Fairfield Hills right away, having a clear focal point can be of value. It can help us be on the lookout for opportunities that appear, to draw them in to a coherent vision. For example, if someone is looking to build an indoor sports center in town, we could encourage them to do so at Fairfield Hills. Having a strong, compelling vision could help the town come together and make progress on the improvement of the property.

**Various scenarios generated by the participants in the Community Input Council:**Scenario #1

- 1) Sports Arena, similar to Harbor Yard at Bridgeport, as central feature.  
Multi-use facility where concerts can also be held.
- 2) Cinema complex, similar to the Loews Theatre at Danbury, though perhaps with fewer screens.
- 3) These two key projects would serve as “anchors” or a “core magnet” get things moving.
- 4) Around that “core”, the other uses would also be included: community sports and community arts, agricultural open space, social services, additional municipal services.

Scenario #2

- 1) 60 acres land-banked for future educational needs
- 2) Municipal Arts Center as “destination” for town
- 3) EMS facility
- 4) Multi-purpose field with parking
- 5) Adding to Youth Academy if necessary
- 6) Remaining land left open for park-like pursuits (Open Space).
- 7) Very small-scale commercial in alignment with community uses  
(CSA, horse boarding, etc.)

Scenario #3 (similar to #2, but w/o land-banking)

- 1) Municipal Arts Center, with playhouse space, art and dance classes.
  - a) community focus w/some regional draw, similar to NYA.
  - b) built either by renovating Plymouth Hall, or building anew, depending on cost.
- 2) Recreational Complex on Wasserman Way  
w/ climbing wall, squash courts, indoor pool, etc.
- 3) Agricultural component developed into both community gardens (with plots available for individual community members), and public gardens for aesthetic enjoyment.
- 4) Small-scale commercial where it is a logical fit: i.e. coffee shops near art center, etc.
- 5) Taking down all of the buildings (except those slated for renovation) as soon as possible.
- 6) In this scenario, the reasons for not including land banking include a) concern about available space and b) keeping emphasis on arts/sport recreation theme.

Scenario #4 (similar to #3, but with addition of a banquet hall)

- 1) Municipal Arts Center
- 2) Recreational Complex
- 3) Banquet Hall, similar to Fireside, that community can rent for weddings, parties, etc.
  - a) Could be done as private venture, as municipal venture, or as partnership.

Scenario #5

- 1) Combo Multi-Purpose Arts Center/Theatre, in partnership with commercial backer.
- 2) Sports Complex, with small shops next to it (such as ice cream store.)
- 3) Small shops in Duplexes, including boutiques, Ye Olde Confectionery shop, etc.

## **HARVEST from FFHMPRC's Open Community Conversation Wednesday, March 16, 2011**

### **Buildings:**

- 1) Buildings should come down sooner rather than later, as a sign that something is happening. It would look better, and also allow for development.
- 2) On the other hand... a few people felt strongly that, ripping down the buildings is like ripping out the soul of Fairfield Hills. Their beauty is the architectural highlight of Newtown, & they are our best potential for future development, marketing.

### **Need for vision:**

- 1) Participants commented on need for larger, more defined vision. Several such ideas emerged: "Newton's Central Park Moment", "Local Arts and Agriculture", "Green Showcase", "Regional Art School a la Sturbridge". (See "scenarios" page for details.)
- 2) Divergence persisted between those advocating more local visions and those advocating more regional visions.
- 3) A comment made toward the end of the evening offered one possible synthesis. It was proposed to have FFH primarily as a municipal and community center, for all of the non-commercial needs that we have as a community. It was suggested that there is no need to have FFH pay for itself. It was acknowledged that some of these other large-scale, regional visions are great, and could serve to lower taxes by bringing in revenue to town, yet they don't need to happen at FFH (could happen on land off of exit 9.)

### **Honoring past**

- 1) There seemed to be general support for the idea of having some part of FFH that respects/acknowledges its past function. This could be a small museum or memorial.

### **Ideas re Immediate Improvements**

Participants commented that residents are anxious for visible results. They saw both the possibility of and the need for, the following short-term, doable improvements:

- 1) complete the trail system, as a further evidence of progress.
- 2) finish paving the parking lots, to make it stroller and handicapped accessible.
- 3) install sidewalks
- 4) improve physical connectivity to other parts of town.
- 5) create community gardens
- 6) dog park
- 7) place a visual-graphic indicator on site to track continuing progress, make it visible to community (like a giant "progress thermometer".)

**Financial and Development Issues**

- 1) Concern about how FFH is being packaged and marketed.
- 2) Suggestion to wind down Fairfield Hills Authority, integrate FFH into Newtown.
- 3) Concern that the town does not have the capacity to be “developer”. Will need public/private partnership to develop FFH.
- 4) Financial issue needs to be brought forward. If FFH kept as “meadow”, costs minimal. If buildings maintained or rehabbed, costs will soar, due to need to mothball/preserve.
- 5) Of the buildings that are to be saved, who will run / pay for them? Is there a template or model that we can follow, that will lead to successful “town-led” development?
- 6) Bring down costs for preserving/restoring buildings by using regional resources, e.g. Abbot Tech students who could work and learn while renovating. Issue of needing to pay prevailing wage for town-owned properties. How to resolve this?

**Commercial and Housing**

- 1) Strongly repeated theme from the tablecloths: desire to NOT have a lot of commercial development at FFH. Desire to NOT have any housing at FFH.
- 2) At the same time, some people expressed an interest in exploring possibilities for senior housing.
- 3) A few other “voices” from the tablecloths: interest in having “perimeter development” in the form of commercial office space; desire to discuss some residential options.

**Ongoing Community Involvement**

- 1) Ideas offered on the tablecloths included:
  - a) “Write community into the plan”: Inspire – Inquire – Engage. Invite community members to participate in implementation: Artists, farmers, landscapers.
  - b) Have schools participate, respond to question: “What would you like to see at FFH?”
  - c) Have place on trails, where people can post their opinions.
  - d) Offer webinar, have page on Bee for people to post.
- 2) At the same time, there were one or two comments on the tablecloths that indicated that some people were frustrated with the process, or saw little value in it.
- 3) Still, the majority of the feedback received was that people have found this a valuable process thus far, and would like it to continue in some form.



**FFHMPRC's 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Community Conversation:****Community members' contributions – sorted by theme****How do we go about, making this kind of decision?**

1. Many people would like the opportunity to vote on the final master plan. What would it take, to make that a binding vote?
2. The original intent behind purchasing the property was to make sure it was in the hands of the taxpayers, and to prevent housing subdevelopments from being built. Amending the zoning regulations to include housing is way too big an issue to leave it up to the council or to have done by executive fiat. If we get it wrong, our great-grandkids will be facing the consequences. How do we force a binding vote on this issue?
3. One possibility is a petition to require legislative council to put this on a referendum.
4. Many people don't trust that what is on paper, is sufficient. For example, housing was specifically not included as an option on the Master Plan, and now there is talk of changing that. We want to make sure that our voice in this matter is not taken away.
5. The land is beautiful... but how to guarantee that we can protect it? Control seems to depend upon who is in office.

**Exploring the need for Affordable Housing**

1. The State may be mandating affordable housing, and we may be better off taking the issue into our own hands, deciding where we want that housing to be situated.
2. There are three locations total at the moment that are possible sites for affordable housing – FFH and two others.
3. Has State given Newtown a percentage? How far are we from meeting it?
4. Clarifications: The State has made a suggestion (not a requirement?) of 10%. The goal of 10% means that we would need 1400 units. We currently have 60.
5. We also need to understand that to qualify as “affordable housing”, the housing in question would need to be “deed restricted”. This means it would need to be new housing, since people who already own housing, are unlikely to voluntarily “deed restrict” it. As a result, some housing that is affordable does not qualify since it is not deed-restricted (such as mobile homes.)
6. Currently the State is offering a “carrot”, that it will subsidize a percentage of the costs of affordable housing. The “stick” is that if the property in question is private land, and the town has not met the “suggested guideline”, the developers are free to put in as much affordable housing as they want. This is not true for public land.
7. When will the “carrot” turn into a “stick”? Does Riverview have affordable housing?
8. Concern that 1400 affordable housing units seems like an unattainable goal.
9. Concern that as soon as we relinquish control by allowing housing at FFH, we will lose control of it and not get it back.

**Questions and Concerns re Cochran Proposal**

1. The proposed 180 units at Cochran House are a lot of units, and would involve a lot of traffic, electricity, water flow. Additional people = additional taxes for increased costs, including schools, public services, etc.
2. Question: Have the current residential proposals been accompanied by an impact analysis on the school system? Some of us would like to know what the impact would be.
3. Concern that once the land is zoned ok for housing, we won't be able to stop further housing from coming in. The builders in this area have a lot of power.
4. The blueprint for the Cochran House apartment indicates that they will be taking up all of the parking currently used for Lander Field. During baseball season, there is lots of life at Lander Field, especially on the weekends. Also, right there is the opening to the walking trail. Where are people going to park, for baseball and for hiking? What's going to happen to the picnic areas? What's the rush?
5. We need to be thinking of the residents, the people who live in Newtown already. Instead of apartment buildings, we need a nice new parking lot, with a water fountain, and a little playground for the siblings of the youth playing baseball.

**Support Expressed for Certain Kinds of Housing**

1. Some of us are open to the idea of affordable housing, but we want to see something smaller – for example, nice garden apartments in the former doctor's houses... or something off to the side, instead of right on the main hub.
2. Some of us are not sure if Cochran proposal is a good fit, but still feel that we should consider some kind of housing, to meet the needs of greying residents, as well as our grown children who are unable to return to the area due to housing costs.
3. It would be great to have a place for seniors, for residents who are downsizing. And some of us would like to have affordable apartments where our grown children can live.
4. Some of us would like a village downtown at Fairfield Hills, something like Ritchfield.
5. Some of us would prefer any housing to be condos, not apartments. The landlord business is not a good business for the town to be in.
6. Some of us would like to have a few amenities, like coffee shops, available at FFH. Yet in order for that to happen, there needs to be a greater number of people there, and some limited housing could help make that happen.
7. Some of us are in favor of planned communities, where one can walk to everything, and would be willing to consider something like that at FFH, IF it was done with a great deal of transparency.

**Need for Larger Vision**

1. We need to define a vision for the campus. We need to create a vision first of what we want as a town, THEN partner with a developer who can help us create that vision.
2. The question is, do we want FFH to be an economic engine, or do we want it to be town-owned open space? If we zone FFH for housing, before having decided this question, it forces it in one direction, makes it harder to “unwind” the momentum later. Until we answer this question, we need to be very careful about zoning changes.
3. What do we want as a town? Some of us are attracted by the rural and suburban features of Newtown, including the two-acre minimum for housing lots, less crime, etc. At the same time, we need to look at Newtown as a whole, and decide what we want to accomplish, in order to be able to make decisions about FFH.
4. This is NOT a homogenous community... many people, with many different perspectives, which makes it hard to figure out where to go from here.

**More on, “How do we, as a town, make these decisions?”**

1. Some of us feel strongly that we need to change the charter and the ordinances, so that the people are the ones who get to decide.
2. The FFHA was created to expedite the leasing process. We need to repeal the FFHA’s charter, and amend the charter of the legislative council, so that these decisions will be up to the voters, through a town meeting.
3. Since this is public property, it should be a public decision.
4. We need to feel more TRUST in our elected officials, that we can trust them to do what we elected them to do. To accomplish that, there needs to be more transparency with regard to planning, financials, etc. There has been significant progress in this area, and it needs to continue. Transparency gives people a greater sense of security.
5. On the other hand, this “gotta happen by May 1<sup>st</sup>” creates a feeling of FEAR, and concern about whether our opinions will count or not. What’s the rush???
6. For some of us, if we felt a greater sense of TRUST, we’d be willing to consider some housing options, such as planned communities where one can walk to everything. However we’d need to take the time to create a balanced plan, with EXCESSIVE amounts of transparency, to be able to support this option.

**More on Vision and Planning**

1. Do we have the cart first or the horse first? We need a set of guiding principles, a mission statement that can be used as a set of criteria to help us plan.
2. The current Master Plan for FFH was not arrived at in a vacuum – it was arrived at, by involving the whole town in an extended planning process. Also, the current 2004 Plan of Conservation and Development, created by the Planning and Zoning Commission, addresses all of the issues in town. We are currently at the beginning of creating the next one, and will be holding public hearings on the question of housing at Fairfield Hills.

3. It seems sometimes that there is not enough planning in our town. Maybe it seems that way because when we engage in planning, the input is usually 20%- 20%-20%-20%-20%. There is usually not a clear majority in favor of anything.
4. With regard to the current Master Plan for FFH, the residents of Newtown voted it down. We don't have an existing voter-approved Master Plan.
5. At one point in time, the plan for FFH included housing, and the FFHA asked that housing be removed from the plans. Some members of the Planning and Zoning Commission feel that it is possible for housing to be put back into the plan, in a very limited way, in a manner that would not "open the door" to unlimited development.
6. Some of us think we can subdivide FFH, zone parts of it one way & parts of it another.
7. The Planning and Zoning Commission will be having a public hearing re Housing at FFH a week from tomorrow (Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>.)

#### **Other Issues regarding FFH**

1. Question re costs invested so far in FFH. Response: almost \$30,000,000, and about 4,000,000 annual upkeep.
2. For some of us, it does not make sense to spend a lot of time discussing the \$30M already spent. We are where we are, and the question is, where do we want to go?
3. There is a historical and educational component of FFH that is important to preserve. It was built in 30's, and was a self-sustaining community including farming. Some of us would like to see something at FFH to help us not forget that history, and be able to teach children about how much we have advanced in the treatment of mental illness.
4. Some of us are very concerned about the state of the existing buildings, and the risk that they present for the town in their current condition.

#### **More Voices in Favor of "Green and Open Space"**

1. Responding to the idea of "the borough" – we already HAVE a downtown. What about fixing that, and leaving FFH open for cross-country skiing, etc.? Because once we turn FFH into a downtown, it's gone. Let's keep it GREEN.
2. Any plan should at least maintain the current recreational system.
3. Current mission statement (Master Plan) already specifies recreation, music, sports, and cultural as the main goals of FFH. Looking at this, it's clear that apartments don't fit.
4. We have an average of 200 families and siblings that use Lander Field from April to October at the baseball field. It is a jewel for the town. We are a model for surrounding towns. In the fall we have around 500 kids playing baseball -- in the spring, we have 850 kids, and three travel teams for each group. We have picnics there afterward. This is about the KIDS. They need to be the focus of our mission statement.

#### **Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee's Next Steps**

1. We will be preparing a survey that will be made available to everyone. Survey will be available for input for 3-4 weeks.

## Appendix D: Informing Ourselves and the Public

The first step in our process was to gather supporting information about Fairfield Hills and its role within the town. As part of this step, we created a [recap of the 2005 Master Plan and subsequent activities](#) to provide a form of the plan that could be used by members of the public to gain a better understanding of the plan. The recap document was based on both the existing Master Plan document and on interviews with John Reed (current chair of the Fairfield Hills Authority), Bob Geckle (previous chair of the Fairfield Hills Authority and member of earlier efforts), and Amy Dent (previous member of the Fairfield Hills Authority and member of earlier efforts). We also created focused efforts to understand the current state of municipal and public needs pertaining to Fairfield Hills by forming subcommittees tasked with reaching out to town boards and commissions, organizations with a vested interest in the property, and supporting documents and other sources for supporting information. The efforts, categorized below by subcommittee, resulted in eleven reports (appended in full at the end of this appendix) that were used as input to our public participation processes.

We'd like to acknowledge the help of Rosa Zubizarreta. Some of the reports were a bit dense. Rosa took the time to understand the content and then crafted community summaries to help ensure that we could communicate more effectively.

### **Demographics**

**Members:** D Zukowski, P Lundquist, G Steele

**Sources:**

Document: Planimetrics, "Newtown Buildout Analysis & Population Projections"

Document: US Census, both 2000 and 3-Year estimates [2006-2008]

Document: Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) Town Profile

Document: Current school enrollment figures, as of October 29, 2010

Document: Garner Correctional Institution population estimate as of 3/28/10

<http://www.newstimes.com/news/article/Garner-inmates-to-count-as-Newtown-residents-in-424541.php>

**Report(s):** [FFHMPRC Demographics Report](#)

**Notes:** Several of the links we used are now no longer reachable, though the report still includes them.

### **Education**

**Members:** N Roznicki, M Floros, M Mossbarger, D Zukowski

**Sources:**

BOE Facilities Subcommittee

Bill Hart, BOE

Debbie Leidlein, BOE

Janet Robinson, Newtown Schools Superintendent

Ron Bienkowski, Newtown Schools Business Manager

Document: FFHMPRC Demographics Report

**Report(s):** [FFHMPRC Education Report](#)



**Notes:** Our information was based primarily on interactions during the BOE Facilities Subcommittee meetings, though we also attended full BOE meetings and a BOE “Tea” to listen to the current concerns of the public.

### **Public Safety and Municipal Administration**

**Members:** M Floros, N Roznicki, D Zukowski

**Sources:**

Police Commission & Police Chief

Ambulance Assoc president

Fire Commission & Chief of Newtown Hook and Ladder (spoke at a meeting)

**Report(s):** [FFHMPRC Municipal Report](#)

**Notes:**

### **Resources and Infrastructure**

**Members:** A Shepard , M Floros, B Roberts

**Sources:**

**Report(s):** [FFHMPRC Infrastructure Report](#)

**Notes:** As noted in our recommendations, this topic requires a much more thorough investigation than we could accomplish within the timeframe and charge we had.

### **Commercial and Housing**

**Members:** R Maurer, M Floros, M Mossbarger, A Shepard, G Steele, D Zukowski

**Sources:**

Chris Kelsey, Town Assessor

Elizabeth Stocker, Director of Economic & Community Development

Fredrick Hurley, Director of Public Works

George Benson, Director of Planning & Land Use

Herb Rosenthal, Former First Selectman

Dr John Reed, FHA Chairman

John Madzula, Current member FHA

Richard Sturdevant, Vice Chairman of previous FHMPRC

Michael Struna, Commercial Broker

Peter Damico, Owner NYA

Walter Motyka, Member EDC and former member of FHA

Bob Tait, Director of Finance

Ruby Johnson, Member of the public (spoke at meetings)

Document: FAIRFIELD HILLS AUTHORITY, Newtown, Connecticut : A Commercial Development Opportunity, January 2010 updated version available at:

<http://www.fairfieldhills.org/PDF/DevPackage.pdf>

Document: State of CT Municipal Fiscal Indicators, November 2010,

Document: Newtown Plan of Conservation and Development 2004

Document: Newtown, CT, Available properties <http://www.newtown.org/ss-available-properties.html>

**Report(s):** [FFHMPRC Commercial/Housing Report](#), [FFHMPRC Cost vs. Control Scenarios](#)

**Notes:** Both documents include simple models used for projecting financial/tax information. These models were vetted with both Chris Kelsey (assessor) and Bob Tait (Finance Director) to ensure that they were reasonable, given the information available.

### **Open Space, Recreation, and Social Services**

**Members:** D Zukowski, P Lundquist, M Mossbarger

**Sources:**

Amy Mangold, RoseAnn Reggiano, and Carl Samuelson, Parks and Recreation Department Director and staff members  
Ed Marks, Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission  
Marjorie Cramer and Mary Gaudet-Wilson, Member and Chair of the Conservation Commission  
Jennifer Johnson, Chair of the Cultural Arts Commission  
Elizabeth Stocker, Director of Economic & Community Deployment  
Beth Agen, Director of Newtown Youth and Family Services  
Tom Murtha, Chair of the Board of Directors for Newtown Youth and Family Services  
Lisa Swartz, Member of the Board of Directors for Kevin's Community Center  
Mary Fellows, Sandy Hook Farmers Market  
Addie Sandler, Relay for Life  
Frank DeLucia, Nunnawalk Meadows (spoke at a meeting)  
Ruby Johnson, Member of the public (spoke at meetings)

**Report(s):** [FFHMPRC Social Services Report](#), [FFHMPRC Parks and Rec Report](#), [FFHMPRC Arts Report](#), [FFHMPRC Events Report](#), [Conservation Commission Open Space Letter](#)

**Notes:** Unfortunately, we could not find a compatible time to meet with members of the Commission on Aging during our information gathering period. Also, the report for open space was provided by the Conservation Commission.

### **Process and Public Participation**

**Members:** P Lundquist, B Roberts, M Mossbarger, G Steele

**Notes:** The prior appendices summarize the core portions of our public participation process.

The reports listed above are included on the following pages, as follows:

Report Name	Pages
2005 Master Plan Review Recap and Subsequent Activities	<a href="#"><u>Pages 71 - 74</u></a>
FFHMPRC Demographics Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 75 - 82</u></a>
FFHMPRC Education Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 83 -86</u></a>
FFHMPRC Municipal Report	<a href="#"><u>Page 87</u></a>
FFHMPRC Infrastructure Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 88 - 89</u></a>
FFHMPRC Commercial/Housing Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 90 - 102</u></a>
FFHMPRC Cost vs. Control Scenarios	<a href="#"><u>Pages 103 - 107</u></a>
FFHMPRC Social Services Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 108 - 110</u></a>
FFHMPRC Parks and Rec Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 111 - 115</u></a>
FFHMPRC Arts Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 116 - 117</u></a>
FFHMPRC Events Report	<a href="#"><u>Pages 118 - 119</u></a>
Conservation Commission Open Space Letter	<a href="#"><u>Pages 120 - 122</u></a>

## 2005 Master Plan Recap and Subsequent Activities (Feb 28, 2011)

### Preface

The 2005 Master Plan[1,2] is the embodiment of a set of ideas that evolved during the late 1990's and early 2000's. While this report will not review the earlier activities during the years that led to the need for a master plan, it does try to show how those ideas helped to frame the current Master Plan. In addition, the core aspects of the existing plan are summarized here and some of the underlying assumptions behind the plan are called out as part of the focus of our review.

### Crafting the plan

The current Master Plan was framed by three sets of ideas: 1) a set of themes, as developed by the 14 member 1999 -2000 Fairfield Hills Advisory Ad Hoc committee and approved in the 2001 Town Meeting authorizing the purchase of the campus, 2) public contributions gathered during a set of activities by the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee, a group charged with preparing the plan, and 3) a set of objectives that was used to guide the synthesis and presentation of the ideas above.

### Thematic direction

The themes, as documented in the Master Plan on page ES1 are:

*The Town Meeting vote authorized a variety of activities to be undertaken by the Town including preparation of a Master Plan for the 186-acre area. The material distributed at the Town Meeting established five themes for this Master Plan. These themes were:*

- *The Campus should contain a substantial open space component inclusive of both active playing fields and passive open space.*
- *One or more of the existing structures should be renovated and adapted for use as Town offices and possibly educational uses.*
- *Selected structures within the entry plaza portion of the Campus should be renovated for economic development activity, such as small professional offices.*
- *A core area of the Campus could be reserved for revenue generating economic development activities compatible with other uses and the surrounding area.*
- *All components should be provided within the context of a master plan that preserves the campus environment, with the Town maintaining overall control of the Campus. [1]*

### Understanding community needs and wants

*"As shown in Figure 3 [see Appendix A], the committee has held 26 meetings, invited 45 community groups to present needs for the Campus, held two community workshops of two sessions each, hosted a tour of the Campus and produced a video tour of the Campus for broadcast on local access TV. The entire process was covered extensively by the Newtown Bee including the publishing of a two-page insert describing alternative plans for discussion at community workshops." [1]*

The Master Plan includes an appendix, called Exhibit C, that summarizes all of the needs and wants that were uncovered during the meetings of the Fairfield Hills Ad Hoc Committee, as well as the groups expressing them. This information has been included, in Toto, as Appendix B of this report.

**Three guiding objectives**

Though not explicitly noted in the plan or the work related to crafting the plan, in looking back the plan was, in effect, guided by three objectives. The main objective, held by the members of the Ad Hoc committee, was for preserving the maximum amount of flexibility for long-term decisions while addressing immediate needs of the community, stated as follows in the Master Plan:

*“The central philosophy of the Committee has been one of flexibility. The Master Plan proposed by the Committee addresses immediate needs as expressed by the community while retaining future opportunities which come with purchase of the Campus from the State. Decisions as to these opportunities will be made over several decades by Newtown residents.”*

[1]

Again, the Master Plan focuses on the near term in a way that maximizes future flexibility. To this end, the committee reviewed the needs and wants that were raised during their meetings and public participation sessions, and identified the core near term needs of the town. They banked over 72% of the land, noting the “*specific use of these areas will be decided over several decades.*” To support the long-term, a process for reviewing the Master Plan every five years was instantiated<sup>4</sup>.

A second objective held by the committee was that the feel of the campus should be retained. The committee, with the support of Planning and Zoning, supported maintaining the overall esthetics by creating a design district to maintain the architectural identity of the campus and by selecting a group of buildings for renovation and repurposing that showcased key architectural elements of the campus.

The third objective was to shield the Newtown taxpayers as much as possible from financial burdens resulting from the redevelopment of the property<sup>5</sup>. By including some commercial development, the goal was that the total costs would be less overall.

**Master Plan overview**

Based on the three guiding objectives above, the current Master Plan was created that ensured the future flexibility of the use of the property by land banking the majority of the land and providing a review mechanism every five years. It also focused on a few, very near-term community needs and on trying to encourage enough commercial development to offset the costs associated with providing for those community needs, while preserving the architectural integrity of the property. The plan also calls for the demolition of all unused buildings, should the implementation of the plan not materialize within five years.

**Salient features of the current master plan**

Based on input from town leaders and the public, the committee identified the following as immediate or potential near-term needs, calling them out specifically in the Master Plan:

- Protecting the Aquifer
  - The amount of impermeable surfaces is restricted even in the campus area outside of the aquifer protection zone, to ensure that the aquifer is adequately “recharged.” Therefore, emphasis is placed on getting the most out of every non-permeable surface. For example, parking lots are shared where possible.

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<sup>4</sup> Our 2010-2011 Master Plan Review Committee was convened under the 5 year review process.

<sup>5</sup> The objective of reducing the impact of campus development on taxpayers was identified through informal conversation with multiple members of the Fairfield Hills Authority and the Ad Hoc Master Plan Committee.



- Town Hall & Educational Offices
  - Shelton (building or footprint), sponsored by the town
- High School Academy
  - Kent (building or footprint), sponsored by the town. However, should the school determine that it no longer needed an academy, Kent would join the others listed for commercial development.
- Community Use, envisioned to *“to meet community needs including the Senior Center, cultural programs, recreation programs and special community events or assemblies of people such as the Friends of the Library Book Sale.”* [1]
  - Plymouth Hall, sponsored by a non-profit
  - Bridgeport, sponsored by a private interest. Note that Bridgeport was also listed as a potential building for private development (see next bullet)
  - Administrator’s House, sponsored by a non-profit or the town as a museum
- Commercialization for reducing the overall financial burden
  - Stratford, Newtown, Woodbury, Canaan, the duplexes, and potentially Bridgeport
  - Three “infill” buildings of 50,000 sq. ft. each
- The use of the single family houses for affordable housing.
- Adding seven fields to the three existing ones on the property and the two abutting ones, noting - *“The fields can be constructed in a sequence and within a schedule to meet the priorities of the Parks and Recreation Commission and users as well as coordination with other demolition and construction activities proposed in the Master Plan.”* [1]
- Road changes / Parking / Utilities needed to support the above.

The bulk of the Master Plan discussion focuses on the aspects of the plan that are considered immediate, i.e., the municipal center and the push for commercialization to minimize the overall financial impact on the taxpayer. It includes plans for the Shelton-based version of a “town hall,” and a commercialization strategy centered around leases (nominally with 30-year term and upfront payments of the full lease amount). The plan also includes a great deal of financial detail, potential phasing, and a section on impacts resulting from the implementation of the Master Plan.

### **Learning the realities of the property**

The process and associated discussion to buy the property took many years, during which the property was neglected. When the purchase was finally completed, the conditions of the buildings had deteriorated significantly. In addition, the State’s estimates for clean-up costs vastly underrepresented the amount of money that would be needed to remediate the property. These two realities have caused much turmoil in the plans and execution of those plans for the property.

### **Shifts during the ensuing years**

As the plan was being implemented, several unforeseen conditions became apparent. The following list calls out all changes to the Master Plan:

- It was learned that the property under Shelton had significant water issues that would make repurposing or reconstructing the building infeasible. Faced with this dilemma, the town leaders and plan implementers decided that Bridgeport Hall was the next most appropriate building for municipal use.
- The use of the single family houses for affordable housing was removed as requested by the selectmen based on feedback from community surveys.
- A high school addition was constructed, obviating the near-term need for an academy.

- A private interest requested permission to build a recreational facility at the campus.
- The Commission on Aging and other leaders of the senior population requested that the Senior Center use be removed from the community center noted in the Master Plan.
- With the latter two and the addition of the Newtown Youth Academy, the reuse of Plymouth was deemed impractical – given its level of deterioration, and so it is now slated for demolition.
- A Band Shell was added to the West Meadow to support the arts.

### **Accomplishments**

- Newtown Youth Academy
- Municipal Center
- One full-sized baseball field. Lights were added to extend the playable hours enough to postpone the need for an additional full-sized field.
- Partial implementation of a trail system
- Some infrastructure improvements, like roadwork, electricity, broadband, telephone, gas, and storm water drainage upgrades.
- Parking
- The demolition of the dangerous tunnels and five buildings

### **Areas that we are revisiting for the review**

As part of this five year review, we are revisiting several aspects of the Master Plan, in part because of changes in the plan and in the community at large. These aspects include:

**Housing:** Housing has been reintroduced for two reasons. First, the housing boom has subsided. Second, we are in the midst of discussions around the desire to increase the diversity of our housing stock to offer young couples and seniors places in town they can afford. This discussion is part of a broader, state-wide discussion about affordable housing.

**Minimizing costs via a campus-focused strategy:** With the discussion around expanding the use of the property to include even more town services, including social services and safety, we've had folks questioning whether one small piece of Newtown should be used to carry so much of the load for town services. Instead, others are looking into taking a broader, town-wide approach including leveraging ongoing discussion surrounding the overall plan of conservation and development for the town.

**Town retention of land ownership:** Our attempts to increase the commercial base at the campus have not panned out. While some folks attribute the lack of success to political instability, others suggest that the problem lies with the use of leasing vs. outright sale. That is, long-term leases for commercial development are often used in urban centers, though are much less commonly used for towns the size of Newtown. Yet others are suggesting that the notion of leasing was appropriate, but the requirement for upfront payments of the full lease was the problem. Perhaps a more traditional approach would be more effective. One final, and very large component, is the recession that hit in December 2007. As the economy recovers, we should ensure that we are poised to realize our goals for the campus.

### **Sources:**

[1] The 2005 Master Plan, <http://www.fairfieldhills.org/PDF/MasterPlan2005.pdf>

[2] The 2007 Master Plan Amendment, [http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public\\_Documents/NewtownCT\\_FFHills/ModToPlan.pdf](http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public_Documents/NewtownCT_FFHills/ModToPlan.pdf)

**Appendices :** The appendices have been removed to help minimize the overall size of this document. Please refer to the [online version of this document](#) or the [2005 Master Plan](#) to view them.

## **FFHMPRC Demographics Report**

Given the detailed nature of the final report, the information gathered by the Demographics Subcommittee of the 2010-2011 Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review committee is provided below in two forms. First, a community summary is provided that calls out the core messages of the work. Then, the full report is provided for those interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the overall approach.

### **Community Summary**

This committee has worked hard to create an estimate of what the future long-term population of the town may be, to help us better engage in long-term planning. Future needs for services -- including educational services, recreational services, police services, etc. -- will be based on our future population. This makes it critical to create careful estimates of projected population growth.

Different models, based on different assumptions, give us different growth rates. For example, some models base future growth on extrapolating from the “boom years”, while other models base future growth on extrapolating from the most recent recession years.

As a committee, we have sidestepped this controversy by looking at what the population of our town will be, once we reach the “build-out” (the point in the future where all available residential land under our current zoning laws has been developed.) While models differ as to WHEN that will happen, we can find some grounds for agreement by looking at WHAT the population numbers are likely to be when we reach “build-out”, regardless of how long it may take us to do so.

One additional factor that we have taken into account in our calculations, is that the state is encouraging localities to provide a goal of 10% of the total dwellings to be targeted as “affordable.” This is important because affordable housing is usually denser housing, and thus increases the population at build-out. We have taken the assumption that we will in fact meet this requirement, as a way of calculating what the “high end” of our population is likely to be, at the “build out” point.

The 2008 Planimetrics report estimates that the build-out population is about 33,770. In our calculations, we have found that if we in fact meet the 10% affordable housing requirement, we are likely to reach a population of 37,150 for the town of Newtown. This means that we would be likely to need land for an additional high school at that point in time.

The various assumptions that were used in making these calculations are included in the detailed version of this report. Also, we have called out various factors that could affect our model.

## Detailed Demographics Report (Feb 21, 2011)

### The role of demographics for our committee

- We need metrics for ensuring that our survey(s) and other forms of public input appropriately represent the town (i.e., respondent data will be weighted to reflect the real-world demographics of our community)
  - Assumptions behind survey:
    - The survey will be town-wide
    - The survey is intended to reflect views of the citizenry within today's current social and economic climate.
- We also need an estimate of the overall, long-term population of the town. Such information provides a context for vetting alternatives when the subcommittees talk with resources. For example, it provides grounding to better understand the needs for fields, schools, emergency services, etc., to enhance strategic, long-term planning for the use of the Fairfield Hills property.
- Primary Source
  - Planimetrics, "Newtown Buildout Analysis & Population Projections"
- Other Sources
  - US Census, both 2000 and 3-Year estimates [2006-2008], see: [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)
  - Reconcile with US Census 2010 when available (expected February, 2011 - as noted on above landing page).
  - Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) Town Profile, see: <http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/Custom-Images/newtown2010.pdf>
  - Current school enrollment figures, as of October 29, 2010 <http://www.newtown.k12.ct.us/site/files/enrollmnt.rpt-10-29-10.pdf>
  - Garner Correctional Institution population estimate as of 3/28/10 <http://www.newstimes.com/news/article/Garner-inmates-to-count-as-Newtown-residents-in-424541.php>

### Metrics for ensuring reasonable representation of community

Unless otherwise stated, the combined resources of CERC Town Profile data and US Census (2000 and 3-Year estimates 2006-2008) will be used as reference for the following demographic parameters:

- Age
- Gender
- Employment
- Ethnicity
- Marital status
- Household income
- Households with seniors
- Households with children under 18 at home
- Households with children in the Newtown Public Schools – will be sourced from Town/BOE data
- People who voted in the last budget referendum – will be sourced from Town/Registrar of Voters data

### Working assumptions re: overall, long-term town population for better strategic planning

- **Our Position:** To better understand the long-term strategic uses for the Fairfield Hills property, we believe that an estimate of population based on the build-out of the town, as modeled in the Planimetrics document, tempered with more recent information from

other population sources (see above), provide a reasonable set of assumptions for us to proceed with<sup>6</sup>.

- Our POV regarding the two population projections: The two highly different views provided in the documents strongly suggest that the underlying models are extremely sensitive to recent historic trends. The first, the “Population Projections for 2000-2030” document essentially views the future through the lens of the tail end of a time period rife with housing speculation. The “School Enrollment Dynamics & Projections 2010-2019” document extends the economic realities seen during an unprecedented recession through to 2020. Both population studies show example routes to eventual build-out. In our opinions, an estimate of the final population at build-out, not the actual route to build-out, is pertinent to the work of the committee.
- Leveraging Planimetrics Build-out Expectations:
  - Expected population at build-out is about 33,770 (Planimetrics, page 4, 17). Note that this is based on a calculated number of housing units and an estimate of 2.79 persons per household.
  - Current Newtown population count is: 27, 658 (US Census 3-year estimate, minus Garner Population).
  - Garner population count is: 597
  - Overall number of seniors (65+) will double (Planimetrics, page 17).
  - Current Newtown senior population count is: 3007 (US Census 3-year estimate).
  - Estimate segmentation for school-aged population based on Census and CERC data. Use this as the top-bound for a range of 5%. The range, while somewhat of a wild guess, is meant to illustrate the impact of smaller overall households – i.e., should birth-rate continue dropping.
  - Based on above, the recommended population counts are listed below. The calculations provide some level of illustrating of the impacts, e.g., we use a range for the school age population and also show how the numbers would change if the zoning were to change to allow 10% more dwellings (e.g., to accommodate state recommendations for affordable housing). Refer to the appendix to review the calculations used to create these tables.

Number of dwellings	12,104
Build-out population	33,770
% increase from 2008 Estimates	22%
Estimated Seniors	6,010
Seniors as % of population	18%
Non senior population	27760
School age [20% - 25%]	[5,550 – 6,940]
Elementary (34%)	[1,890 – 2,360]
Intermediate (17%)	[940 – 1,180]
Middle (17%)	[940 – 1,180]
High (32%)	[1,780 – 2,220]

<sup>6</sup> Note that this courser level of granularity removes reliance on highly random variables seen in the nearer-term population studies. Such variables can and do change dramatically over time. Trying to account for them long-term is beyond the scope of the FFH Master Plan Review Committee’s objective and would not add any new insight for our purposes, in our opinions.



Table 1: Build-out populations, assuming 2008 Zoning

Number of dwellings	13,314
Build-out population	37,150 <sup>7</sup>
% increase from 2008 Estimates	34%
Seniors as % of population	18% <sup>8</sup>
Estimated Seniors	6,690
Non senior population	30,460
School age [20% - 25%]	[6,090 – 7,620]
Elementary (34%)	[2,070 – 2,590]
Intermediate (17%)	[1,040 – 1,300]
Middle (17%)	[1,040 – 1,300]
High (32%)	[1,950 – 2,440]

Table 2: Build-out populations, assuming Zoning for Affordability

- Examples of Externalities: Note that overall populations and segmentations are based on social trends. Therefore, the numbers listed above should be used with an understanding that external factors beyond those modeled may change the overall population and sub-population segmentations. Note that since this assumes build-out, the economic influences that more directly influence construction and turnover are not included.
  - **Zoning regulations:** Our belief is that zoning will change to allow more housing units, rather than fewer, i.e., the calculated number of housing units would increase.
  - **Ethnic Diversity:** Currently, the population of Newtown is predominantly white. State-wide the overall minority population and the minority birth rate are growing at a much faster rate than for the white population. This will cause an upward pressure on the number of persons per household.
  - **Multi-generational households:** During the recession, children have been moving in with their parents. For higher-priced areas, this trend has been going on even longer. Depending on whether the children bring children, the persons per household number may go up in ways that affect schools and recreation.
  - **Senior Flight:** As housing sizes and taxes go up, and grown children settle in other locales, there may be a response wherein seniors leave to be closer to their children or to maximize the utility of their retirement funds. Should a higher number of senior households move away, they would likely be replaced by households with children. This will cause an upward pressure on persons per household.
  - **Open Space Acquisition:** Currently, Newtown does have an open space acquisition policy. Execution of this policy will reduce the number of future projected dwellings for a given zoning plan. Likewise, private landowners may establish conservation easements that would further remove land from development.

<sup>7</sup> Note that the table below holds the number of people per dwelling at 2.79. This likely overestimates the population, since the number per dwelling is likely related to the diversity of dwelling types.

<sup>8</sup> For diversity, assume that the percentage of seniors remains at 18%, i.e., that the number of seniors more than doubles.

- **Soaring Energy Costs:** Much of Newtown's draw could be reduced, i.e., commuters to Hartford, Stamford, etc. would be less inclined to move here because over financial costs associated with commuting would increase. This could impact actual build-out, depending on availability of industrial and professional jobs nearby.

## Appendix (for the Demographics Report)

### Base Assumptions

**Source:** Planimetrics Report (Note this assumes 2008 zoning.)

Build-out population	33,770
Increase in # of seniors	2X
# of existing dwellings	9669
# additional dwellings	2435
Total # dwellings at build-out	12104
People per dwelling	2.79

### Segmenting core subpopulations

We are calling out two subpopulations, seniors and school-age children. For the seniors, we use the Planimetrics recommendation that their number will (at least) double. For school-age children, our recommendation is that we simplify the overall calculations, and offer a potential range instead. To determine the range, we need to determine what percentage of the non-senior population school-age children accounted for and put this number as the top of a 5% range – given the trend that families are still getting smaller. Based on the tables below, we recommend that the range be 20 – 25%.

**Source:** US Census American Community Survey 3- yr estimates, 2006-2008

Total Newtown population	28,255
18 yrs and older	20,201
Under 18	8,054
Under 5	1,577
School age (5-17)	6,477
65 yrs and older	3,007
Garner population	600
Non Senior, Non Garner <sup>9</sup>	24,648
School age as % of NonSenior, NonGarner	26%

<sup>9</sup> Note that there is an assumption here that the age range for the bulk of the Garner population is between 18 and 64.

**Source:** US 2000 Census

Total Newtown population	25,031
18 yrs and older	17,699
Under 18	7,332
Under 5	2,022
School age (5-17)	5,310
65 yrs and older	2,189
Garner population	597
Non Senior, Non Garner	22,242
School age as % of NonSenior, NonGarner	24%

**Source:** CERC 2009

Total Newtown population	26,011
% 5-17	21%
School age (5-17)	5,462
Garner Population	600
Non Garner population	25,411
%Senior	10
Non Senior, Non Garner	22,870
School age as % of NonSenior, NonGarner	24%

Segmentation to type of school: We suggest the use of current ratios, since these are as valid as anything else. For example, social trends may well cancel as in: 1) More established families will buy into Newtown and 2) Couples are waiting longer to start families.

**Source:** Current school enrollment figures, as of October 29, 2010

School	Enrollment	Percentage
Elementary	1,840	34%
Intermediate	896	17%
Middle	897	17%
High	1,729	32%
Total	5,362	100%

**Build-out populations, assuming 2008 Zoning<sup>10</sup>**

We chose not to use the numbers provided in the Chung 2008 Population assessment since the methods used to determine these numbers were very subject to recent economic conditions, as shown by the ensuing 2010 study.

Number of dwellings	12,104
Build-out population	33,770
% increase from 2008 Estimates	22%
Estimated Seniors	6,010
Seniors as % of population	18%
Non senior population	27,760
School age [20% - 25%]	[5,550 – 6,940]
Elementary (34%)	[1,890 – 2,360]
Intermediate (17%)	[940 – 1,180]
Middle (17%)	[940 – 1,180]
High (32%)	[1,780 – 2,220]

**Build-out populations, assuming Zoning for Affordability<sup>5</sup>**

A presentation summarizing incentive zoning was presented to the Planning and Zoning commission a few months back. This presentation discussed potential changes to the current zoning that would diversify housing by adding roughly 10% more dwellings.

# of dwellings	13,314
Build-out population	37,150 <sup>2</sup>
% increase from 2008 Estimates	34%
Seniors as % of population	18% <sup>3</sup>
Estimated Seniors	6,690
Non senior population	30,460
School age [20% - 25%]	[6,090 – 7,620]
Elementary (34%)	[2,070 – 2,590]
Intermediate (17%)	[1,040 – 1,300]
Middle (17%)	[1,040 – 1,300]
High (32%)	[1,950 – 2,440]

<sup>10</sup> Rounding to nearest ten's place.



## FFHMPCR Education Report (Feb 28, 2011)

### Objective

The objective of the Education Subcommittee was to identify the future needs and requirements for space at Fairfield Hills included in the current Master Plan and to gain public input. In consideration of this objective, members of this subcommittee attended several meetings of the Facilities Subcommittee, of the Board of Education, as well as meetings of the full Board of Education. Utilizing the information obtained from the Board of Education, including its Facilities Subcommittee and in combination with information from our Review Committee's Demographics Subcommittee the following report is submitted.

### Background

The Board of Selectman established a Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee (FFHMPCR) with the purpose of reviewing the Master Plan, which "*should be consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development*" and of gaining public consensus regarding the needs and uses planned for Fairfield Hills. The FFHMPCR, in turn established several subcommittees, this Education Subcommittee being one of them.

The Plan of Conservation and Development, updated in 2004, (page 57) stated:

*"To meet the need for additional high school space the Board of Education has expressed a preference for building a new High School Academy on the Fairfield Hills campus, with an enrollment capacity of 500 students."*

The Fairfield Hills Master Plan – Executive Summary, 2005, stated:

*"The Master Plan for Fairfield Hills contains the following attribute(s) intended to benefit the Newtown community."*

*"Opportunity for a high school academy on the Kent House site and an alternative high school program at a location to be determined by the size of enrollment."*

The Fairfield Hills Master Plan – 2005, (page 17)

*[The Kent site for the academy] "has several advantages including proximity to the proposed playing fields; a location on the campus closest to the existing high school; the site can be developed without impacting other components of the plan; shared parking with the playing fields would be possible; and a new access road from Wasserman Way to the east of the existing structure is a possibility to directly serve the site. However, it is important for the Board of Education to make the policy decisions as to the purpose, size and design of such an academy. This decision should be presented to the Newtown community in the level of detail and subject to community dialogue which has been the case with the planning effort for the entire campus."*

## Enrollment Projections (based on the Demographics Subcommittee working document)

While the Chung report indicated a near-term school population decline, information gathered from Planimetrics, "Newtown Buildout Analysis & Population Projections" and other sources indicates that build out would require additional educational space. While it is difficult to determine what Newtown's population will be in numbers and demographics during build out, it is important to plan, educationally and fiscally, for sufficient land at Fairfield Hills for the upper build out as noted in the *Table A below*:

*Table A - Projected 2030 to 2050 Build Outs Under Various Zoning regulations*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Assuming 2008 Zoning</b>	<b>Assuming Zoning For Affordability</b>
Number of dwellings	12,104	13,314
Build-out Population	33,770	37,150
% Increase from 2008 Estimates	22%	34%
Estimated Seniors	6,010	6,690
Senior as a % of Population	18%	18%
Non-Senior Population	27,760	30,460
Total School Age	5,550 - 6,940	6,090 – 7,620
Elementary	1,890 - 2,360	2,070 – 2,590
Intermediate	940 - 1,180	1,040 – 1,300
Middle	940 - 1,180	1,040 – 1,300
High	1,780 - 2,220	1,950 – 2,440

## Board of Education (BOE) Facilities Subcommittee Recommendations

The Facilities Subcommittee of the Board of Education has indicated that elementary schools should be located in neighborhoods and upper level schools should be centrally located. Fairfield Hills land (at least 60 acres) should be preserved for upper level schools. At the Board of Education meeting, December 7, 2010 D. Leidlein, Chairman of the Facilities Subcommittee reported reserving land at Fairfield Hills for future school needs (2030 – 2050). The purpose, size and design of the facility should be determined by future Boards of Education.

At the same December 7th meeting D. Nanavity reported that the current high school, having experienced two additions, is currently maxed out, meaning that there is not enough land (47.5 acres) to support any further additions. The state's move to increase graduation requirements could use classroom space in a manner not anticipated previously when the addition was first proposed. Additional classroom space may be required to accommodate the 25 graduation credits proposed by the state.

The BOE facilities subcommittee is in support of reserving 60 acres of land at Fairfield Hills. The demographic information provided below in Table B is in support of this recommendation.

*Table B – Current and Projected Student Populations*

2010	October 1, 2010	Build-out: 2008	Build-out: Affordable
Elementary (K-4)	1,840	1,892 – 2,360	2,070 – 2,590
Intermediate (5&6)	896	940 – 1,180	1,040 – 1,300
Middle (7&8)	897	942 – 1,180	1,040 – 1,300
High School (9-12)	1,729	1,780 – 2,220	1,950 – 2,440
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,362</b>	<b>5,554 – 6,940</b>	6,090 – 7,620

## Discussion

Currently, there is some discussion about reducing the need for in-classroom space via online education and other methods of delivering instruction. We cannot tell if these are viable. According to the superintendent, experience with alternate education methods such as unguided or minimally guided online learning has not been successful to date. Planning with the assumption that large-scale versions of it will be successful in 30 years is not prudent. Likewise, should the build out population trend to the higher ranges or the effective capacity be reduced because of added graduation requirements then the current high school will not be suitable. The discussion of any additional school buildings should be reserved for future Boards of Education.

The BOE Facilities Subcommittee recommends a conservative approach in reserving 60 acres for an additional high school. If we make this assumption and the student population follows the lower estimates, then the land will become available for other uses based on the needs of the community at that time. If, on the other hand, we do not bank the land for a high school and the upper estimates are reached and alternate education methods are not realized, then the town

will have difficulty finding the appropriate acreage, even for a second high school, since the bulk of the town will have been built out.

#### Points to Ponder

- Reserving 60 acres of reasonably contiguous land supports building a new high school, should the higher end of the demographics range occur. This allocation would ensure that the land would be available, and not acquired via another, less desirable and costly method, e.g. eminent domain.
- Alternatively, should the high school enrollment remain at or below current student levels, then, 30 acres of the banked land could be used for a middle school, should that enrollment become inadequate for current middle schools. The remaining acreage could be used as deemed appropriate at that time.
- Reserving 60 acres limits other uses for a significant portion of the campus
- If build out occurs, and a future Board of Education determines that a second high school is preferred, then a central location could be considered less desirable.
- Reserving the land for a high school is a conservative approach. Definitive, long-term needs for education are inherently difficult to project.
- Is the campus environment of Fairfield Hills most appropriate for educational purposes or are there other places in town more (or equally) appropriate for educational facilities?

## **FFHMPPRC Municipal Report (Dec 06, 2010)**

**The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a meeting on Monday December 6, 2010 at the Newtown Municipal Center, Newtown, Connecticut.**

Mr. Floros called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

**Present:** Michael Floros, Nancy Roznicki and Deborra Zukowski

### **Minutes from meeting 12/6**

#### **Summary of Findings**

Consolidate emergency services requires estimated 6-7 acres, preferably with direct access to Wasserman Way.

#### **Why FFH**

Emergency services require access to Routes 25, 34 & 302 corridors

Central location minimizes longest distance to farthest corners of town

#### **Points to Ponder:**

Access to major town arteries

Central location minimizes longest distance to farthest reaches of town

Campus presence to minimize vandalism while buildings remain empty

Police station is visible and easy to access for people in need

Police station is a visual deterrent being close to school

Need easy and safe access to Wasserman Way

Traffic congestion on Wasserman Way at certain times of the day

Given current public discourse, the recommended acreage includes a 2 acre contingency for fire station. Should the current goal for a new firehouse within the Borough be achieved, this contingency can be ignored.



## **FFHMPCR Infrastructure Report (Feb 28, 2011)**

FAIRFIELD HILLS CAMPUS

NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT

### **Community Summary**

- Further development at Fairfield Hills may include potentially significant unanticipated costs to upgrade the sewers.
- Added costs may be incurred even without additional development, given the current state of the sewers.
- Lack of development may include potentially significant unanticipated costs to upgrade the water system.

### **Detailed Infrastructure Report**

Note that the following discussion is very preliminary. A more comprehensive engineering study is needed to better understand overall costs and tradeoffs of various approaches for ensuring that the campus has adequate and cost-effective access to key infrastructure.

#### **WATER SUPPLY**

The Campus is served by a town owned water supply system that serves Nunawalk Meadows, Garner State Prison, Reed School, 5 private dwellings on Mile Hill South, and the state owned property to the north of Wasserman Way along with the Fairfield Hills Campus area.

The water supply is adequate to meet current and foreseeable demand. It should be noted; however most of the service lines were installed in the 1930's for the most part. There is a 16 inch main line that was installed in 1953.

Consideration should be given to the repair or replacement of lines. If the main water service loop of 7,000 linear feet was to be relined at \$125.00 per linear foot the cost would be \$875,000. If the internal cross connection pipes were added the cost could go up an additional \$500,000 (4,000 L.F. @ \$125/LF). The water service line upgrades can be done in sections over a period of time.

The water supply system is managed by the Newtown Water and Sewer Authority.

#### **SEWERS**

The sewer lines in the campus and town are managed also by the Newtown Water and Sewer Authority. The sewer lines in the campus are mostly of the 1930's vintage. The condition and viability of the existing sewer is being evaluated. Preliminary investigation is indicating major repairs (or replacement) should be made to the lines. If the town was to replace the main line from Nunawalk Senior Housing to the 1996 sewer line the cost could be around \$500,000. (2,850 L.F X say \$175 per L.F.) This cost could vary depending on the depth of the piping

system. If the pipe could be raised from its current depth the cost could be reduced but some lateral line may also need to be replaced.

The 100,000 gallon per day sewer capacity set aside for the Campus, Nunawalk Senior Housing and housing on the east side Queen Street (previously State owned) is adequate to handle needs for the foreseeable future.

### ROADS

The campus is served by a network of roads that are town designated roads. The designated town roads are Trades Lane, D.G. Beers Boulevard, Simpson Street, Primrose Street, and Keating Lane. The various driveways are currently maintained by the town.

### ELECTRICAL

The electrical service has been upgraded to Newtown Hall. This service could serve Washington Square, Newtown Hall and Woodbury Hall. It is expected that any major upgrade to the remainder of the buildings, or building sites would require the extension of underground electrical services.

### NATURAL GAS

Natural Gas is available, but service lines would need to be extended.

### CABLE AND TELEPHONE

It would be that underground cable and telephone lines would need to be extended if significant development happens to one of the buildings, or building pads.

## **FFHPMRC Commercial/Housing Report (Feb 28, 2011)**

Given the detailed nature of the final report, the information gathered by the Commercial and Housing Subcommittees of the 2010-2011 Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review committee is provided below in two forms. First, a community summary is provided that calls out the core messages of the work. Then, the full report is provided for those interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the overall approach.

### **Community Summary**

- 1) There is currently around 500 acres of undeveloped industrial-zoned acreage in Newtown, NOT including the acres available at Fairfield Hills. Some of this undeveloped acreage may be difficult to develop; a more realistic estimate of usable industrial land may be 200 – 300 acres.
- 2) On the one hand, people want to maintain or increase the percentage of overall commercial development in Newtown, based on the assumption that the more commercial development the lower the residential tax burden. The appended report raises questions about this assumption, by comparing “like” towns, calling out the commercial percentages and associated Mill Rates.
- 3) On the other hand, people want to maintain the “rural suburban” nature of Newtown, and thus the current target percentage for commercial development is about 10%. This target ratio is set as part of the Plan of Conservation and Development, which is currently undergoing review and discussion.
- 4) For any 40 acres of new commercial development (whether at Fairfield Hills or elsewhere) the percentage of commercial to residential development is estimated to increase by 0.5%. This would result in an estimated tax relief per residence of roughly \$57 per dwelling per year.
- 5) At the future point of build-out (when all available residential land and 200-300 additional acres of industrial/commercial in Newtown is built), developing the additional 40 acres at Fairfield Hills would increase the percentage of commercial development by 0.4%, resulting in an estimated tax relief of roughly \$46 per dwelling per year.
- 6) Aside from this potential tax relief, other potential income from development at Fairfield Hills could include:
  - a) Any payments for the lease of the land; (the current Master Plan estimated the possibility of receiving a one-time sum of \$5,730,000 for a thirty-year lease of selected buildings, to offset costs associated with providing infrastructure, parking, and sidewalks.)
  - b) Any annual fees in common charges; (the current Master Plan estimates \$375,000 of yearly non-tax revenue in common fees, to offset the expected \$500,000 operational costs associated with the campus including snow removal, street lights, and security.)
  - c) Any potential income from any portion that the town might decide to sell; current estimates are several million dollars for every 10 acres
- 7) The appended report explores five different types of development, with associated considerations of each: a) commercial development; b) economic development; c) apartment buildings; d) multi-family age-restricted dwellings, luxury; e) multi-family age-restricted dwellings, low-to-mid income. A “Points to Ponder” section for development types starts on page 6 of this document.

8) The report also explores various considerations regarding the manner of development: a) leasing both land and building; b) leasing land and having tenants build; and c) re-parceling and selling off portions of the land. A “Points to Ponder” section for manner of development starts on page 7 of this document.

## **Detailed Commercial and Housing Report**

**History:** Commercial development, especially when paired with housing, has been one of the more contentious issues dividing the public on the reuse of the Fairfield Hills campus. Historically, the Master Plan of 2005 report focused on the implementation of commercial and/or economic development, with the assumption that a master developer would drive the development of at least 150 acres, as set forth by the Planning and Zoning commission in their Fairfield Hills Adaptive Reuse (FFHAR) zoning specification. Despite several plans from many developers, the town was not able to agree on the proposals of any one developer.

While housing was considered during early discussions, and even included in pre-2005 versions of the FFHAR zoning – specifically multifamily, affordable housing, and apartments, it had been removed by the time the 2005 Master Plan was drafted and amended in 2007. As such, it is now no longer a permitted use within the FFHAR zone. It appears that housing was removed because of concerns that it would significantly impact the available open space at the campus, compromise community use, and increase the overall tax burden on the town.

Over the last few years, representatives of our town have entertained several proposals made by individual entrepreneurs to establish restaurants, a veterinary hospital, and several medical offices on the campus. While the town had accepted the idea of these proposals, none reached the contract stage. Several proposals were withdrawn, while others could not secure financial support. As a result of limited or no commercial and economic activity at Fairfield Hills, the town engaged a commercial real estate agent to promote the property.

Since then, one developer has expressed an interest in Cochran House for up to 160 one and two bedroom apartments and as part of the deal he would also be willing to refurbish Newtown and Woodbury for commercial use. Given economies of scale, his position was that there was insufficient return on investment for refurbishing those two buildings without the large-scale housing component. To date, that proposal has been put on hold – given the requirement of housing – and the only reuse of the campus has been the construction of a new building that houses the Newtown Youth Academy and the renovation of Bridgeport Hall for the town's municipal building.

**Discussion:** This document hopes to call out some of the alternatives that could be a part of a revised/updated Master Plan, and places these alternatives in context of today's realities given what we have learned as we tried to implement the existing Master Plan. This discussion will focus on three topics: 1) why economic development, 2) the types of development and 3) the manner in which the development could go forward. The discussion will attempt to look at the opportunities from a town-wide perspective, when appropriate.

### **Why Economic/Commercial Development?**

The original Master Plan attempted to balance the costs incurred by the town for the development of the campus with revenue that could be gained by encouraging low-impact (re: taxes and environmental) businesses to join the redevelopment. The idea was that the businesses would carry the cost of refurbishing the buildings and needed infrastructure rather than having the town incur that cost. Also, the businesses would offset the operational costs via campus maintenance charges and property taxes.

At this time, the town has used its own funds to begin the rehabilitation of the campus including the original \$20,050,000 bond, \$1,525,946 from the sale of associated houses, \$3,500,000 and \$500,000 in additional bonds for parking and ball field lights, respectively, and other monies

including matches for grants, in-kind services, and a movie lease. Going forward, the Fairfield Hills Authority estimates that an additional bond of about \$21,500,000, along with an estimated \$5,730,000 generated by potential leases and \$3,000,000 in additional grants, is needed to finish the redevelopment as guided by the current Master Plan and implemented according to [1].

While the town is reviewing its overall space needs, the campus sits as a likely candidate for town-based structures like a recreation center, emergency buildings (ambulance and police), core social service offerings and a potential future school. These uses benefit the town as a whole and so a discussion has begun about thinking more broadly about revenue offset across the entire town rather than focusing on the developing the FFH parcel in a revenue neutral manner. Below are some “back of the envelope” calculations to understand the general scope for the financial relief and tax-based benefits we could reap by maintaining a commercial component for the reuse of the campus. This discussion deviates from the prior emphasis on “Revenue Neutral” in the current master plan. Instead, it frames the discussion using a town-wide perspective. Note that this is a “forward-looking” analysis that targets new monies and taxes. Existing bonds, their use, etc. are not a part of this discussion.

#### **Anticipated, Non-Tax Revenues**

The amount of non-tax revenue is based on the method and extent of development. In the current Master Plan, the method is to lease Newtown, Woodbury, Stratford, and the Duplexes, and to lease the land under three “infill” buildings of 50,000 sq ft each. As part of the review, we are also encouraging the discussion to include outright sale of land. For the former, non-tax revenue is estimated in [1] as a single total payment of \$5,730,000<sup>11</sup>. In addition, the former also provides for \$375,000 of recurring, non-tax revenue to offset the expected \$500,000 operational costs associated with the campus[1]. Should the town decide to sell the property, the potential price per acre is about \$300,000, given access to infrastructure and a level, usable property devoid of wetlands. However should the buildings remain on the land, the price per parcel would be reduced based on the cost to demolish or reuse the buildings. Note that reuse of the buildings would roughly cost the same as demolishing them and building anew.

#### **Impact on Taxes**

Ideally, the town should have a target percentage of the grand list for commercial development. This target percentage, in general, helps define the character of the town and the load the residences pay to maintain that character. For example, emphasizing the “rural” feel of a town generally means fewer commercial establishments while cities tend to have noticeably higher ratios. At this time, Newtown is trying to maintain a “rural suburban” feel, and the target percentage for the commercial portion of the total tax burden is about 10%. The following table provides current ratios of some other Connecticut towns that are considered to have similar overall demographics as Newtown (i.e., the state classifies them as DRG B towns). These numbers are available in a state document, provided to Chris Kelsey[2]. Note that towns used in the companion Parks and Recreation field report are noted by the blue background.

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<sup>11</sup> This lease payment is intended to offset the additional costs associated with the town’s responsibility to provide infrastructure, parking, and sidewalks.



	Grand List (equalized, 2008 <sup>12</sup> )	Commercial Ratio <sup>13</sup>	Mill Rate (equalized, FYE 2009 <sup>2</sup> )
New Fairfield	\$1,838,553,506	3.20%	13.39
Madison	\$3,418,584,858	6.40%	12.47
Granby	\$1,042,797,363	6.60%	20.40
Guilford	\$3,458,303,405	9.10%	12.44
Woodbridge	\$1,237,659,590	9.80%	19.17
Newtown	\$3,911,851,782	10.40%	16.00
Fairfield	\$11,932,514,731	10.60%	13.34
Monroe	\$2,118,469,134	12.00%	16.15
Middlebury	\$1,073,349,050	15.20%	16.17
Greenwich	\$34,135,985,844	15.50%	5.15
Avon	\$2,626,776,220	15.60%	15.17
Simsbury	\$2,597,332,434	16.70%	20.71
Glastonbury	\$4,105,519,780	17.00%	19.83
Brookfield	\$2,565,298,098	17.70%	13.08
Southbury	\$2,602,421,768	17.80%	14.56
West Hartford	\$4,953,979,658	17.80%	24.79
Trumbull	\$5,134,660,833	18.30%	16.18
Cheshire	\$2,825,089,390	19.10%	16.32
Orange	\$1,751,395,840	25.50%	19.46
South Windsor	\$2,723,168,663	26.00%	18.70
Farmington	\$3,676,303,178	29.30%	13.47

To get a better idea for the impact of acreage on the percentage a simple model projecting build-out, shown in detail in Appendix A, has been developed to help guide our discussion. The model makes several assumptions to simplify the overall calculations. These assumptions include:

- The future commercial development will be “equivalent” to current development. This may not be the case, e.g., restaurants incur higher personal property taxes than average while apartment buildings incur almost none. There is some anecdotal evidence that the model is fairly robust, given that the metrics influenced by this effect are comparable for both Newtown and Trumbull, see Appendix A.
- The impact of bringing currently developed acres up to “highest and best use” is not accounted for. There are currently some investigations for increasing the capacity of developed parcels in Newtown – e.g., the development that includes

<sup>12</sup> Refer to Definitions section at the end of this document.

<sup>13</sup> The ratio only reflects the contribution of commercial real estate and property taxes. There was insufficient information to include commercial motor vehicles. Therefore, the true ratios are a bit higher though the impact of the commercial motor vehicles contribution is a very small, in general.

the Newtown Bank building in Sandy Hook. This effect would push the commercial ratio higher than shown.

- Vacancy rate changes are not modeled. Given we are still recovering from a recession, the rates should decrease, pushing the commercial ratio higher because personal property would increase.
- Open space efforts are not modeled. Such efforts will reduce the number of residential dwellings, and so should push the commercial ratio higher.
- Rezoning (planned or forced) residential land to accommodate affordable housing would push the ratio lower.
- Rezoning residential land to commercial would potentially push the ratio higher, in that more land could be developed.

The table below shows the impact on the ratio, should 200 and 300 external acres of the available 500, industrial-zoned acreage be developed. It also shows the impact, should 40 acres at Fairfield Hills be added to the mix. Note that the model assumes that residential development has increased as projected in the Planimetrics build-out study[3], i.e., the calculations are trying to demonstrate full residential build-out and accompanying commercial development that will happen concurrently. Only a portion of the available 500 industrial-zoned acreage is included, given that some of those acres are difficult to develop (e.g., they are polluted or wetlands, etc.).

Newtown	Comm./Res.
2009	10.3%
2009 + 40 FFH	10.8%
Build-out, 200 Comm.	10.7%
BO, 200 Comm. + 40 FFH	11.1%
Build-out, 300 Comm.	11.7%
BO, 300 Comm. + 40 FFH	12.1%

If there is no commercial development in Newtown other than at Fairfield Hills (40 acres), then the percentage increases 0.5%. For a budget of \$110,000,000, that means \$550,000 more is provided by the commercial tax base. Tax relief for residences equates to roughly \$57 per dwelling per year (2008 dwellings). At build-out the percentage drops to 0.4%, provided 200 - 300 acres of available commercial land are also built out when all dwellings are built out. Assuming the budget grows in proportion with the number of dwellings (i.e., to 138,000,000), this equates to roughly \$46 per dwelling per year. Note that these calculations have assumed the lower bound on build-out, i.e., current 2008 zoning. The diversity zoning would likely include apartments (where these are considered commercial development). Disclaimer: The numbers are illustrative. They should be considered rough, at best, but should show the general scale of the tax benefit per household. Should the town find a way to increase commercially developed acreage to 500, something that is within reach though difficult, given current zoning and development restrictions, the commercial percentage would increase to 13.6%. Further increases in the ratio would likely require rethinking the overall planning and zoning strategy of our town.

In summary, should the town decide to commercially develop the equivalent of 40 acres on the campus, then every household would gain roughly \$60 in tax relief every year. The impact to the target commercial percentage of the total grand list is 0.4% - 0.5%. That is it, in itself,

commercial development at Fairfield Hills is not capable of significantly changing the overall tax burden on residences. Instead, should the town decide more relief is desired, a larger town-wide strategy – via the work around the plan of conservation and development – is needed. In addition to direct tax relief, there would also be added non-tax revenue, potentially several hundred thousand dollars per year in common charges, should the town succeed in leasing the buildings slated for reuse or alternatively, several million dollars for every 10 acres the town sells off.

### Types of Development

There are five types of non-municipal development that are open for debate:

- Commercial Development - encourages commerce (the trading of money for goods/services) - e.g., what we see in the Big Y complex and South Main Street
- Economic Development – businesses that provide jobs, e.g., like the reuse of the PB building and for things like office parks, corporate offices, and community college satellite campuses
- Apartment Buildings – mid to high density, small 1 to 2 bedroom units
- Multi-family age-restricted dwellings – either luxury or targeted for occupants with low/mid income levels.

A companion discussion is how such future development should be guided. For example, what should the zoning be re: types of businesses? Should the land targeted for development be zoned as a single large parcel (one developer) or several smaller parcels (e.g., develop parts over time)? Should there be an Authority, and if so, what should its role be? Such discussion on guiding the development will likely be taken up in the follow-on effort(s) needed for completing the updates for the existing master plan.

The following paragraphs try to call out issues for each type of development, along with a few notes as to why Fairfield Hills may make sense, where applicable. Please consider this just a seed for discussion. As other issues and FFH rationales get discussed, we will add them to this document.

### **Commercial Development**

#### **Points to Ponder**

- More likely to get such development done in today's economy
- Serves the needs of the people who work at the Municipal Center, NYA, and any other building occupant (e.g., copy center, dry cleaners, coffee shop / café)
- Serves the needs of recreational users ( informal restaurant )
- May require a housing component to make sustainable (according to FHA realtor)
- Benefits limited portion of community
- Potentially will have look similar to that of other retail centers
- Generally retail requires frontage on main roads, i.e., Wasserman
- May introduce conflicts with local businesses

#### **Why FFH**

- Serves those who work at FFH
- Provides an alternative retail center for southern Sandy Hook neighborhoods

### **Economic Development**

#### **Points to Ponder**

- Provide high-level jobs to members of the community
- Generally more amenable to a “campus-like” look
- Does not rely on a housing component for sustainability
- Does not rely on frontage on main roads as much as retail
- Unlikely to happen in the short term

**Why FFH**

- Close to 84
- Requires infrastructure

**Apartment Buildings****Points to Ponder**

- Provide housing options to a more diverse population, e.g., young adults and families and seniors
- Helps increase affordable housing stock
- Burden on town resources less per dwelling
- Helps provide sustainability of retail development
- Depending on the density, burden on town resources may be more per acre. For example, if 160 apartments placed on 2 acres, and there is one child per 10 dwellings, then 16 children will need to be schooled per two acres, as opposed to 4-6 children for 1 acre zoning.

**Why FFH**

- Close to 84
- Requires infrastructure
- How would this play out re: focus on village centers in Dodgingtown, Hawley, Sandy Hook, etc? Would this use add to the overall health of the town enough to warrant such use at FFH?
- FFH is large enough to handle the bulk of the apartments needed across the town

**Elderly Housing – Luxury****Points to Ponder**

- Brings new taxpayers into town, who generally use low amount of town resources
- Residents generally come from other, higher cost towns, and so have limited history with Newtown
- Often restricts access to allow only residents and their guests

**Why FFH**

- Potentially very high revenue from selling land for such developments

**Elderly Housing – low/mid income****Points to Ponder**

- Provide a way to help long-time residents afford to stay in Newtown
- Residents will generally sell existing houses in town to families, and so overall increase burden on town resources could happen. The amount of increase depends on how many would have been forced to leave town vs. staying put.
- Currently, there are about 150 residents of Nunnawalk, and a waiting list of about 150.

**Why FFH**

- Close to an existing development (Nunnawalk)

**Manner of development**

Currently, the Master Plan emphasizes maintaining ownership of both the land and the buildings, leasing the building for a specific term (currently 30 yrs, though this could be changed). Tenants are responsible for refurbishing the building for their use. Given that many of the buildings are not likely to be salvaged in the upcoming years and that the plan calls for “in fill,” a second option is for the town to maintain ownership of the land, and allow tenants to build their own buildings, as was done by NYA. A final option is to re-parcel the land, and sell specific

pieces that are targeted for development outright to a developer. Note that this assumes that the parcels are zoned for the type development that has been determined best for the campus.

### **Lease both land and building**

#### **Points to Ponder**

- Town maintains long-term ownership of land and buildings
- Town ultimately may get useful real estate when tenant departs
- Refurbishing a building is as expensive as tearing it down and building fresh
- Tenant may balk at cost of refurbishing in light of terms of lease – though this may be able to be negotiated by reducing the overall price of the lease
- Town is in the business of property management, which requires certain skills
- Government process for leasing may be clumsy (e.g., required to gather bids), though may be a bit less clumsy when overseen by an Authority.
- Infrastructure must be made available to each building

### **Lease land, tenant builds**

#### **Points to Ponder**

- Town maintains long-term ownership of land
- Town ultimately may get useful real estate, including building, when tenant departs
- If a building already exists, it needs to be torn down. Would likely stifle interest
- Tenant may balk at potentially losing his investment in the building at the end of the lease. Would leasing have to include something like a “guarantee” to re-lease? If so, then what would we gain over just selling the property outright?
- Town is in the business of property management, which requires certain skills
- Government process for leasing may be clumsy (e.g., required to gather bids), though may be a bit less clumsy when overseen by an Authority.
- Infrastructure must be made available to each building

### **Re-parcel and sell land**

#### **Points to Ponder**

- Reduces need for town to provide extensive infrastructure, i.e., could make parcels larger and take infrastructure to the edge.
- Reduce capital costs for building demolition, if sold with building on it
- Potentially more tax revenue
- Uses a more standard way for getting development done
- Town no longer property manager
- If infrastructure only taken to the edge, may reduce price per acre
- If sold with building on it, will likely greatly reduce price per acre
- Loss of long term ownership of a part of the campus
- Less able to leverage shared parking – i.e., more land will be consumed by parking

### **Definitions:**

#### **EQUALIZED MILL RATE**

The Equalized Mill Rate, or the Effective Tax Rate, is calculated by dividing the adjusted tax levy, as presented in the municipality's Tax Collector's Report, by the Equalized Net Grand List. [2]

#### **EQUALIZED NET GRAND LIST (ENGL)**

The Equalized Net Grand List is the estimate of the market value of all taxable property in a municipality. Municipalities



revalue their Grand Lists based on schedules established by the Connecticut General Assembly (CGS 12-62). Thus, there can be a marked difference between the market value of all property and the assessed value. OPM calculates the ENGL from sales and assessment ratio information and grand list reports filed by the municipality. [2]

**Sources:**

- [1] Fairfield Hills Authority, Board of Finance Meeting, October 22, 2009.
- [2] Municipal Fiscal Indicators, November 2010 – from Chris Kelsey, via email (Jan 26, 2011)
- [3] Planimetrics, “Newtown Buildout Analysis & Population Projections” [http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public\\_Documents/NewtownCT\\_WebDocs/NewtownBuildoutReport.pdf](http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public_Documents/NewtownCT_WebDocs/NewtownBuildoutReport.pdf)
- [4] 2009 Grand List information for Newtown, Trumbull, provided by Chris Kelsey email (Jan 10, 2011)
- [5] Personal email from Liz Stocker (Dec 14, 2010), re: questions on current and future status of commercial development.

**Appendix A (of the FFHMPRC Commercial/Housing Report)**

The following calculations are an attempt to understand how adding commercial development at Fairfield Hills augments recurring (tax) revenue from a town-wide perspective. The model is an initial attempt at helping to bring such perspective into our public participation process, and is very much in ROUGH DRAFT form.

Part I - Real estate 2009 grand list of Taxable property for the town of Newtown [4]		
TYPE	GROSS ASSESSMENT	NOTES
Residential	3,205,798,357	
Commercial	212,700,152	
Industrial	64,697,930	
Vacant land	127,156,261	
Use Assessment (Farm)	1,128,550	
Apartments	12,945,549	
Total Commercial	290,343,631	Includes apts., Industrial, and Commercial
Total: Other	3,334,083,168	
Total	3,624,426,799	

Motor Vehicle/Personal Property		
TYPE	GROSS ASSESSMENT	NOTES
Personal (i.e., Business)	110,561,554	According to Chris Kelsey, this is all commercial
Total Motor Vehicle	207,771,612	
Motor Vehicle: Comm.	5,870,639	
Motor Vehicle: Other	201,900,973	

Assuming that personal property and motor vehicle contributions can be modeled, in general, as a reasonably static percentage of the associated real estate tax, figure out the percentage for non-commercial motor vehicles of residential real estate and for commercial motor vehicles and personal property of commercial real estate.	
Motor Vehicles as a percentage of residential real estate	6.1%
"Personal" + Commercial Motor Vehicle as a percentage of total commercial real estate	40.1%

Rough Model for Build-out: For this model, assume all residential dwellings, provided for in the 2008 zoning - as estimated by the Planimetrics report have been built. Then, model commercial build-out with two scenarios, 1) where a reasonable lower bound of available commercial land has been built out, similar to the existing mix of development and 2) where a reasonable upper bound of the available commercial land has been built out, again, similar to existing development.

From Planimetrics [2]	
Existing Residential Dwellings	9669
Potential Residential Dwellings, based on 2008 Zoning	12104
Percent increase in number of dwellings	25.2%

From Stocker email [4]	
Number of commercial acres currently developed	770
Number of commercial acres currently undeveloped	500
First Example of additional acres developed (reasonable lower bound)	200
Second Example of additional acres developed (reasonable upper bound)	300
Theoretic maximum number of acres - note that this may not be possible within the current zoning and development restrictions. It is just way to get a sense of what the highest potential ratio could be, given what could be done today.	500

Determine the addition to the different components of the grand list, based on the growth assumptions above. Note that the absolute numbers do not mean that the grand list will be that amount. However, the ratios (see below) will be maintained, provided all property is taxed at the same Mill Rate.

	Res. Real Estate	Res. Prop. (6.1%)	Comm. Real Estate	Comm. Prop (40.1%)
2009	3,334,083,168	201,900,973	290,343,631	116,432,193
Build-out, #1 Comm.	4,013,133,035	243,021,971	365,757,561	146,674,321
Build-out, #2 Comm.	4,013,133,035	243,021,971	403,464,526	161,795,385
Build-out, "Max" Comm.	4,013,133,035	243,021,971	478,878,456	192,037,513

Additional FFH  
acres 40

Now add in 40 acres from FFH to see the difference. 40 acres adds an additional N% to the commercial property figures

	Res. Real Estate	Res. Prop. (6.1%)	Comm. Real Estate	Comm. Prop (40.1%)
2009 + FFH	3,334,083,168	201,900,973	305,426,417	122,480,619
BO, #1 Comm + FFH	4,013,133,035	243,021,971	380,840,347	152,722,747
BO, #2 Comm + FFH	4,013,133,035	243,021,971	418,547,312	167,843,811

Figure the totals and the ratios		
	Total	Comm/Total
2009	3,942,759,965	10.3%
2009 + FFH	3,963,891,177	10.8%
Build-out, #1 Comm.	4,768,586,888	10.7%
BO, #1 Comm. + FFH	4,789,718,100	11.1%
Build-out, #2 Comm.	4,821,414,917	11.7%
BO, #2 Comm. + FFH	4,842,546,129	12.1%
Build-out, "Max" Comm.	4,927,070,976	13.6%

Checking sanity of model with detailed comparison of Trumbull. The key is to see how will the multipliers for the real-estate contributions for motor vehicle and property hold – see last table.

#### Trumbull Details

Part I - Real estate 2009 grand list of Taxable property for the town of Newtown [1]		
TYPE	GROSS ASSESSMENT	NOTES
Residential	3,935,949,240	
Commercial	486,635,600	
Industrial	144,141,900	
Vacant land	45,097,900	
Use Assessment (Farm)	50,800	
Apartments	20,216,900	
Total Commercial	655,593,000	Includes apts., Industrial, and Commercial + utility (4,598,600)
Total: Other	3,981,097,940	
Total	4,636,690,940	

Motor Vehicle/Personal Property		
TYPE	GROSS ASSESSMENT	NOTES
Personal (i.e., Business)	253,821,551	According to Chris Kelsey, this is all commercial
Total Motor Vehicle	254,299,837	
Motor Vehicle: Comm.	3,026,017	
Motor Vehicle:	251,273,820	

This calculation is the same as the one at the bottom of page 8. It is a sanity check on the model. Trumbull likely has a different mix of commercial development than Newtown. For example, it has more commercial apartments. While the numbers vary a bit, i.e., Newtown's sit at 6.1% and 40.1%, the numbers are remarkably close – close enough for a first order model.

Motor Vehicles as a percentage of residential real estate	6.3%
"Personal" + Comm. Motor Vehicle as a percentage of total comm. real estate	39.2%

## **FFHMPPRC Cost vs. Control Scenarios (Feb 21, 2011)**

Given the detailed nature of the final report, the cost vs. control information gathered by the Commercial and Housing Subcommittees of the 2010-2011 Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review committee is provided below in two forms. First, a community summary is provided that calls out the core messages of the work. Then, the full report is provided for those interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the overall approach.

### **Community Summary**

- 1) The current master plan calls for preservation/reuse of the following buildings: Newtown, Woodbury, Stratford, and the Duplexes. These are the ones that are deemed of most architectural value.
- 2) The remaining buildings need to be either demolished or refurbished, in order to not pose an ongoing safety risk: Danbury, Shelton, Norwalk, Plymouth, Stamford, Kent, Canaan, Cochran, and the white houses.
- 3) Original Fairfield Hills bond has been spent, so remaining demolition will require some mix of additional town funds and/or developer investments. Three sample scenarios below:

#### **A). Town demolishes all of the buildings listed in 2) above**

**Projected bond amount:** \$15,000,000  
**household:** \$1,965

**Estimated TOTAL lifetime cost per**

**Results:** Turns campus into “green field” (with exception of the buildings listed in 1, which would still be available for leasing.) Provides for option of town green and all playing fields included in Master Plan. Allows town to choose own mix of public and private development on remainder of land.

**Considerations:** Most expensive option. However, maximizes town control and, can support private development by removing potential “disincentives” that may “scare” smaller companies and/or developers off. Maximum for private development: TBD by town based on emerging opportunities.

#### **B) Town demolishes Danbury, Shelton, Kent, Plymouth, & Cochran (leaves Norwalk, Stamford, Canaan, and White Houses)**

**Projected bond amount:** \$10,000,000  
**household:** \$1,310

**Estimated TOTAL lifetime cost per**

**Results:** Provides for option of town green in front of the Municipal Building and adjacent Arts Center. Opens up the areas planned for playing fields in the current master plan.

**Considerations:** Private developers will need to be found to address other buildings on re-use/demolition list. In return for demolishing other buildings, developers would control (within zoning regulations) how land underneath those buildings is to be used (an estimated 40 acres).



**C) Town demolishes Danbury, Shelton, and Kent (leaves Plymouth, Cochran, Norwalk, Stamford, Canaan, and the White Houses)**

**Projected bond amount:** \$5,000,000  
**household:** \$655

**Estimated TOTAL lifetime cost per**

**Results:** Provides for option of town green. Opens up land for multi-purpose fields, but not baseball-softball fields.

**Considerations:** Private developers will need to be found to address other buildings on re-use/demolition list. In return for demolishing other buildings, developers would control (within zoning regulations) how land underneath those buildings is to be used (an estimated 55 acres).

## Detailed Cost vs. Control Report

### Looking at Capital Costs

To have meaningful public discussion, we need to understand pertinent trade-offs, in this case, the ability to control the property for public use and what that control will cost us. One possible approach to informing our discussion is to pull out those costs that are a part of making the property usable, specifically the demolition costs<sup>14</sup>. Any repurposing can then be considered an “add on,” and costs/benefits tallied independently. For example, the added costs for making the campus desirable for development (ala, town leases) – i.e., additional parking, infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer), and sidewalks – could then be understood and discussed more directly.

The following three scenarios are intended to help provide perspective on overall capital costs. These scenarios are crafted based on the layout of the uses provided in the Master Plan and the anticipated costs for razing the buildings, as provided in [1], specifically:

	7/01/2009 Projections
Danbury	\$205,000
Shelton	\$2,000,000
Norwalk	\$400,000
Plymouth	\$1,250,000
Stamford	\$565,000
Kent	\$3,000,000
Canaan	\$3,000,000
Cochran	\$3,750,000
White Houses	\$200,000
Total	\$14,370,000

### Use / Control Scenarios

1. The town provides about \$15,000,000 in capital funds (not necessarily all at once) to raze all of the buildings noted in [1]. This effectively turns the campus into a “green field” that the town can then decide how best to leverage for the public good, while leaving the buildings identified for reuse in the Master Plan and subsequent implementation[2] available for leasing. Note, this option does not preclude additional/alternate private development of the property. It just removes potential disincentives that may “scare” smaller companies and/or developers off.
2. The town provides about \$10,000,000 in capital funds to raze Danbury, Shelton, Kent, Plymouth, and Cochran. This scenario opens up the areas that are planned for playing fields in the current master plan. In addition, it provides for the option of having a town green in front of the Municipal Building and an adjacent Arts Center<sup>15</sup>. The other buildings are taken care of by private interests, either via reuse or demolition. The developers are then in control (within zoning regulations) of how the underlying land is used and are free to optimize their return on investment, within those guidelines. Governance, i.e., town

<sup>14</sup> There will likely be some other required improvements to the infrastructure, needed regardless of added development, including water and sewer improvements, estimated at \$2M and \$1.5M, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Note that instead of using the \$1,250,000 money to demolish Plymouth, it could be added to the \$3,750,000 currently allocated to a band shell [1] for refurbishing the building, if possible.

ownership and lease vs. direct purchase is discussed in the companion commercial report, as it may impact the likelihood of finding developers willing to shoulder the burden of reuse/demolition. This option provides access to all of the buildings slated for reuse identified in the Master Plan or a possible maximum of about 40<sup>16</sup> acres that could be offered for private development.

3. The town provides about \$5,000,000 in capital funds to raze Shelton, Kent and Danbury. This option opens up land for the multi-purpose fields, as noted in the current master plan, though loses the baseball/softball fields. It also provides for the option of having a town green in front of the Municipal Building. The other buildings are taken care of by private interests, either via reuse or demolition. Like scenario 2, the developers are then in control (within zoning regulations) of how the underlying land is used and are free to optimize their investment, within those guidelines. Governance, i.e., town ownership and lease vs. direct purchase is discussed in the companion commercial report, as it may impact the likelihood of finding developers willing to shoulder the burden of reuse/demolition. This option provides access to all of the buildings slated for reuse identified in the Master Plan or a possible maximum of about 55<sup>3</sup> acres that could be offered for private development.

The following projected costs for the bonds needed for each scenario, provided by Robert Tait[3]<sup>17</sup> are:

	<u>Scenario 1</u>	<u>Scenario 2</u>	<u>Scenario 3</u>
20 YEAR BONDING	*** \$15,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$5,000,000
1st Year Add'l Debt Svs Payment	\$1,350,000	\$900,000	\$450,000
10th Year Add'l Debt SvsPayment	\$1,080,000	\$720,000	\$360,000
20th Year Add'l Debt SvsPayment	\$780,000	\$520,000	\$260,000
1st Year Effect on Mill Rate	0.3509	0.2339	0.1170
10th Year Effect on Mill Rate	0.2807	0.1872	0.0936
20th Year Effect on Mill Rate	0.2028	0.1352	0.0676
1st Year Effective Tax Increase using a Base Mill Rate of 24.00.	1.46%	0.97%	0.49%
1st Year Tax Increase: Amount based on a house with an Assessed Value of \$350,000	\$122.82	\$81.87	\$40.95
Total Lifetime Cost (total of payments)	\$21,300,000	\$14,200,000	\$7,100,000
Total Lifetime Cost per Household (350,000 assessed value) – for entire 20 years	\$1,965	\$1,310	\$655
*** Principal payments are level funding each year (same amount); hence the annual debt service payments (principal and interest) decline over time.			

In summary, every household would have to pay, on average, about \$2000 (total, over 20 years) to enable to town to maintain control over the Fairfield Hills campus. More particularly, the Mill Rate would increase from a base of 24 to 24.35, 24.23, or 24.12, depending on

<sup>16</sup> This number is based on eye-balling the planning zones map provided in the master plan and is not necessarily accurate.

<sup>17</sup> The calculations are based on 4% interest. Should interest increase to 6%, the total lifetime cost for bonding \$15,000,000 increases from \$21,300,000 to \$24,450,000 (about 15% more).

scenario. Again, note that some empty buildings would remain, i.e., those slated for reuse in the current master plan (Newtown, Woodbury, Stratford, and the Duplexes), for the town to use as it determines best.

**Sources**

[1] Fairfield Hills Authority, "FFH Capital Appropriations Calculations & Assumptions, Rev #3," received via email from Walt Moytyka.

[2] Fairfield Hills Authority, Board of Finance Meeting, October 22, 2009.

[3] Personal emails from Robert Tait (Jan 3-17, 2011).

## FFHMPPRC Social Services Report (Feb 21, 2011)

**Preface:** The selectmen are currently working with Kevin's Community Center to help them establish a permanent home on the campus. At this time, Kevin's Community Center is considered a part of the ongoing implementation of the current master plan and so will be considered "existing" with regards to future planning. However, as part of this conversation, the selectmen (Pat in particular) are exploring the possibility of creating a "Social Services Enclave," that would be a centralized place where all families in need could find services. This would, as Pat said, create a "continuum of support for families under stress." Currently, the other social services that could be a part of the enclave include Newtown Youth and Family Services and the Newtown Social Services town department. Kevin's Community Center is included in this document as a potential member of such an enclave because, being first to locate at Fairfield Hills, it would likely influence the location for the enclave.

Note that frequent moves for social services organizations are a big headache since the organizations are often licensed by numerous state agencies. For example, the Newtown Youth and Family Services is currently licensed by four state agencies, meaning a lot of paperwork must be done per move.

### Why Fairfield Hills

- Centralized location – easy to get to
- Ability to co-locate multiple organizations
  - Access more than one service within a single stop
  - Become aware of other services that might be useful

### Status Quo

- **Kevin's Community Center**
  - Current footprint: 2600 sq ft
  - Town budget allotments from 2007 – current: \$45,000 - \$50,000
  - Current Leasing: End date is 11/2011, though there have been discussions about extending it monthly or quarterly. It is possible that the lease could be extended up to a year.
  - \$500,000 grant for "a building on Fairfield Hills Campus." One assumption behind grant is that KCC will grow. There is some uncertainty about the grant, given that all potential state funding is on the table during ongoing budget discussions. However, the discussion about the merits of various alternatives should continue, independent of this uncertainty.
  - Hours are 1-5 PM Wednesday afternoons. Hope to go to 3 days per week
- **Newtown Youth and Family Services (NYFS)**
  - Current footprint: 5200 sq ft – via two leased buildings. Planning on closing down the lease on one of those buildings. Current lease costs \$10,500 per month. Closing one lease cuts that to \$6,500.
  - Lease for remaining building ends Aug, 2012.
  - Town budget allotments from 2007 – current: \$214,000 – \$270,000
  - Use of services has been expanding 15% per year for the last few years. Note that closing one of the current leases means that new clients will not be able to be served.
  - Hours: Mon – Thurs, 9AM – 8PM; Fri, 9AM – 4:30PM. Saturday hours as needed (occasional).
  - NYFS has more requests for services than they have clinician time available. They are limited to how many clinicians can work at one time due to lack of space.
- **Newtown Social Services Department**
  - Current footprint: 800 sq ft (Need to double check this)

- Co-located with police station
- Provides financial assistance programs and food bank

### Needs

- **Kevin's Community Center**
  - 3,000 sq ft
  - Room to grow to 4,000 sq ft
  - Handicap parking and accessibility
  - At this time, privacy concerns or issues relating to potential neighbors do not appear to be a limiting factor, re: location on the campus. However, this topic needs to be addressed more fully by the KCC board.
- **Newtown Youth and Family Services**
  - 7500 sq ft (min is 6000 sq ft). This gives them enough space to be able to proactively encourage members of the community to use the service. That is, currently, clients come to them via word of mouth. They want to be able to advertise to ensure that more who have the need will use their services. This means they need the requested space.
  - Handicap parking and accessibility
  - Privacy very important, given type of service provided. Need to ensure that the clients do not accidentally bump into neighbors.
- **Newtown Social Services Department**
  - 2000 sq ft
  - Handicap parking and accessibility
  - Some privacy preferred
  - Others??

### Discussion

At this time, the Board of Selectmen is reviewing options for where a social services enclave may be placed. Such discussion is outside the scope of this document. By co-locating core social service organizations at Fairfield Hills, the selectmen (Pat in particular) are trying to better support members of the community in need, given the available money at hand. Over the past few years, the town has provided financial support between \$45,000 and \$50,000 for Kevin's Community Center and between \$214,000 and \$270,000 for Newtown Youth and Services (see: [http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public\\_Documents/NewtownCT\\_Finance/2010-11Budget%20summary.pdf](http://www.newtown-ct.gov/Public_Documents/NewtownCT_Finance/2010-11Budget%20summary.pdf)). Much of this financial support has been needed to offset space rental. By co-locating at Fairfield Hills, the operational costs for the organizations will be less, and more money can be made available for the programs they provide.

### Points to Ponder

- The town current supports charitable organizations in the budget. Reducing the operational costs for those organizations means either that the existing money can be spent on providing programs and/or that the overall money can be reduced without impacting program offerings.
- Depending on the location of the enclave within Fairfield Hills, it may not fill all needs of the potential members of the enclave. Either such organizations may not become part of the enclave or other means may be needed to ensure that their needs are met.
- The status-quo, i.e., separate locations throughout town can meet the needs of individual organizations, but likely mean additional operational costs.
- When the police department moves, the building will likely be repurposed. At that time, the two remaining town departments, Social Services and Parks and Recreation, will likely have to move. At this time, the Parks and Recreation is planning to move into a



Parks and Recreation building, currently planned for the campus. The Social Services department then becomes the sole town department not housed at Fairfield Hills.

## **FFHMPRC Parks and Rec Report (Feb 28, 2011)**

Given the detailed nature of the final report, the information about Parks and Recreation is provided below in two forms. First, a community summary is provided that calls out the core messages of the work. Then, the full report is provided for those interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the overall approach.

### **Community Summary**

- When initially purchased, the Fairfield Hills campus included one pre-existing softball field and two pre-existing all-purpose fields. There are also two existing youth baseball fields that abut the property.
- The current Master Plan calls for 2 additional adult baseball fields (for a total of 2), 1 additional adult softball field (for a total of 2), 2 additional all-purpose fields (for a total of 4), and 2 additional youth baseball fields (for a total of 4).
- Of these additional fields, so far one adult baseball field has been built, at a cost of \$1,500,000. This included the costs of razing a building, providing lights, and \$300,000 for parking. The field, with the addition of lights, addressed the immediate needs (2005) for fields according to Parks and Recreation Department.
- At present, the Recreation Department's scheduling is tight, and would greatly benefit from the near-term creation of one additional multi-purpose field.
- A comparison of the ratio of Newtown's residents per playing fields, to the ratio of other neighboring towns, shows that Newtown's current field resources are relatively comparable, though slightly more conservative, than other similar towns in the neighboring area. (This would still be true, even with the creation of one additional multi-purpose field.)
- As the town's population increases, there will be a growing need for the additional fields in order to maintain the current ratio of playing fields to residents. At the "build-out" point, all of the requested fields will be needed in order to maintain the current ratio.
- Some advantages of locating additional fields at Fairfield Hills include a centralized location, water and sewage availability, and relative lack of negative impact on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Projected costs for the remaining fields are \$250,000 per acre for natural fields. This translates to \$500,000 for each two-acre multi-purpose field or a two-acre adult softball field; \$750,000 for a three-acre adult baseball field; and \$437,500 for a 1.75 acre youth baseball field. This does not include costs for razing any existing structures, nor costs for creating parking space.
- Natural fields have associated operational costs for mowing, fertilizing, pest control, and irrigation of approximately \$5,000 per acre per year. Fields created from artificial turf do not require this kind of maintenance; however their initial cost per acre is about double that of a natural field.
- There are some potential conflicts and trade-offs regarding "land-banking" for future uses: fields vs. meeting future educational needs. This is explored in further detail in the main body of this report.

## Detailed Parks and Recreation Report

**Preface:** This report focuses on outdoor active recreation. The Parks and Recreation Department is currently discussing options for a Community Center that includes “zero-entry” and competitive-style pools, a teen center, a multipurpose space with dance studio, additional classroom space to support a variety of programming needs, and offices for the Parks and Recreation staff. At this time, the center is considered a part of the ongoing implementation of the current master plan and so will be considered “existing” with regards to future planning.

The 2005 Master Plan notes on page 1 of the executive summary that *“In addition to preparation of the Master Plan, the Town Meeting authorized the following program components”* including seven playing fields to complement the three existing fields on the campus.



Figure ES6, from the 2005 Master Plan

The plan further states *“The fields can be constructed in a sequence and within a schedule to meet the priorities of the Parks and Recreation Commission and users as well as coordination with other demolition and construction activities proposed in the Master Plan,”* on page 3 of the Executive Summary. To date, a full-sized baseball field has been built. Lights were added to the field to increase available playing hours, and so reduce the immediate need for a second full-sized field. The Newtown Youth Academy has been built where a second such field was planned. Also, there is discussion about reusing Cochran which would displace several, if not all, of the four additional baseball/softball fields located in/near Cochran’s footprint as shown in the field layout above.

As shown by the figure, the fields consume a good deal of the level space available on the campus, and with parking (not shown), effectively limits other uses to Canaan, Plymouth, and the western and eastern portions of the property.

### Why Fairfield Hills

- Centralized location
- Neighborhood opposition to fields, with respect to converting other town-owned land to playing fields
- Need for basic infrastructure including water and sewer.

## Status Quo

The outdoor fields support various programs, including those provided directly by the town and those associated with third-party organizations. The use of the fields is predicated on having at least 80% of the players reside in Newtown. In addition a surcharge is levied, per player, to offset the operational costs associated with the programs – like the replacement of artificial turf. Currently, the surcharges are \$20 per player for programs that use outdoor fields, \$10 per player for indoor courts, and \$5 per participant for other programs, like dance classes. With the addition of the lighted, full-sized baseball field, the Parks and Recreation department is able to support the existing programs requested of it, though scheduling is tight and requires cooperation across all of the program coordinators. However, there are not enough playable hours on outdoor fields for any additional program requests, e.g., extending current single-season programs to multiple seasons.

Operational costs for natural fields include mowing, fertilizing, pest control, and irrigation. Costs per acre are approximately \$5,000, not including capital equipment, gas, and union labor. Also, additional labor would likely be needed. Operational costs for artificial turf are lower and are generally covered by the surcharge fund.

To understand how Newtown field resources compare with “like” towns (as requested by the members of the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review subcommittee on Open Space, Recreation, and Social Services), members of the Parks and Recreation department gathered field information from ten other towns, including nine that are comparable to Newtown, as viewed by the state’s demographic reference groupings, and Ridgefield – a nearby town that serves as a model community that is “one level” up, according to the state’s demographic references. The table below shows a very coarse-level comparison of population per field<sup>18</sup>. Please note that detailed comparisons are not supported since fields vary in size and playable hours (e.g., lights and artificial turf).

Town Demographics		Town Economics		Persons per playing surface				
Town	CERC 2009 Pop. Estimate	CERC 2009 Med HH Income	2008 Grand List Comm. Ratio <sup>19</sup>	'09 – '10 Mill Rate / 2009 Equalized Mill Rate	Total Softball & Baseball	Total Soccer, Multi-purpose	Total Fields	Total Tennis Courts
Trumbull	35047	\$100,644	18.3%	24.07 / 16.18	4381	5007	2336	7009
Simsbury	23166	\$105,420	16.7%	30.10 / 20.71	2896	3861	1655	2896
Fairfield	56544	\$106,767	10.6%	18.90 / 13.34	2356	4350	1528	1767
<b>Newtown</b>	26011	\$114,673	10.4%	23.43 / 16.00	2365	3716	1445	2890
Guilford	21840	\$98,044	9.1%	20.04 / 12.44	2427	2730	1285	4368
Glastonbury	33041	\$103,407	17.0%	29.05 / 19.83	2753	2065	1180	16521
Greenwich	59484	\$126,278	15.5%	8.32 / 5.15	1322	8498	1144	1919
Avon	17558	\$115,186	15.6%	23.41 / 15.17	2195	2195	1097	4390
Madison	18496	\$113,755	6.4%	18.62 / 12.47	2642	1423	925	711
Brookfield	16469	\$102,946	17.7%	18.86 / 13.08	1176	4117	915	5490
Ridgefield	23132	\$137,015	13.0%	20.00 / 13.76	1652	1928	890	11566

The information from the table above suggests that Newtown’s field resources are relatively comparable, though slightly more conservative than “like” towns. The addition of one more multi-purpose field would bring the number of population/multi-purpose fields to 3251 and

<sup>18</sup> The numbers for people per field do not reflect how distributed or centralized the fields are throughout the town.

<sup>19</sup> See the commercial report for a discussion on the ratio of commercial to residential contributions to the grand list.

population per total fields to 1369, still relatively conservative when compared to “like” towns, though it would help loosen the current scheduling.

### Discussion

The Parks and Recreation is still requesting the addition of 6 more fields (roughly 12.5 acres) and associated parking preferably close to the configuration represented in Figure ES6, above. The table below shows population per field without the addition of fields for both the lower and upper population estimates provided in the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review committee’s Demographics Report.

	<b>CERC 2009 Pop. Estimate</b>	<b>Total Softball &amp; Baseball</b>	<b>Total Soccer, Multi- purpose</b>	<b>Total Fields</b>	<b>Total Tennis Courts</b>
2008 Zoning	33770	3070	4824	1876	3752
Diversity Zoning	37150	3377	5307	2064	4128

The table above shows that the population per field increases significantly even for the lower estimates provided in the Demographics Report. By adding the requested fields, the numbers approach the status quo, i.e., sufficient fields for the current programming. Fields would have to be made available in other parts of the town, should programming expand.

	<b>CERC 2009 Pop. Estimate</b>	<b>Total Softball &amp; Baseball</b>	<b>Total Soccer, Multi- purpose</b>	<b>Total Fields</b>	<b>Total Tennis Courts</b>
2008 Zoning	33770	2251	3752	1407	3752
Diversity Zoning	37150	2477	4128	1548	4128

Operational costs will increase about \$300,000 per year, provided all fields are natural turf. These costs are reduced, should artificial turf be used. Construction costs for the existing natural, full-sized field have been noted at \$1,500,000. However, this cost included lights, razing a building and providing \$300,000 for parking. Anticipated construction costs for the remaining 6 fields are roughly \$250,000 per acre for natural fields and \$500,000 per acre for artificial. These estimates are based prior field construction projects and reflect only costs associated with field construction, not parking or razing of existing structures. Additional parking will be needed, though. Complete costs are not yet available.

Two issues need to be considered. First, it is possible that other land could emerge that would be suitable for fields, e.g. by future land donations, land opened to such use by sewer extensions, or repurposing open space (where suitable). Should these future opportunities come to fruition, then the placement of fields at Fairfield Hills should be revisited. Second, there exists the potential for conflicts among the potential uses - for example, should 60 acres be banked for a new high school (potentially needed should the upper demographics estimates occur). This raises questions about the initial placement of the fields, willingness to transfer fields to the high school and to takeover or build replacement fields elsewhere (e.g., on the campus or in school property that becomes available). In short there is a tradeoff, re: providing the best placement of the fields in the short term vs. the risk of needing to replace them should a school be needed in the long term. From a Fairfield Hills perspective, it may mean potentially

using the land banked for the school, but providing alternative land, should the school be needed.

**Needs**

- Two additional all purpose fields for a total of four (2 acres each)
- Two youth baseball fields, in addition to the existing two that abut the property (1.75 acres each)
- One additional adult softball field for a total of two (2 acres)
- One additional adult baseball field for a total of two (3 acres)
- Sufficient parking

**Parks and Recreation “Wish List”**

There is some discussion needed, re: whether these should be part of town offerings or if they might be better provided by private organizations. Note that the town provides lots of outdoor tennis courts in parks. Indoor courts may be better provided through private organizations.

- Ice rink
- Frisbee golf
- Community garden
- Gazebo
- Bocce courts
- Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing
- Picnic areas with playgrounds
- Exercise stations (already noted near trails in the existing Master Plan)
- Completion of the trails
- Dog Park (though there has been progress on providing a dog park across the street)

**Points to Ponder**

- The requested fields maintain the status quo in terms of persons per field, for the expected build-out populations
- Fields require access to parking and infrastructure, including adequate sanitation and water
- There is often significant opposition to situating a field near a residential neighborhood
- Currently, fields are fully utilized – there is difficulty extending further programs
- Using artificial turf and lights can extend playing hours and so accommodate more games<sup>20</sup>
- Artificial turf may not support outdoor events as well as natural turf, since the surface should not be punctured
- Should the fields be centralized in one location or distributed more evenly throughout town?
- Does Fairfield Hills make the most sense for the fields or are there other places in town that are more appropriated?

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<sup>20</sup> Whether the additional playing hours are just sufficient for adding desired programs or if they could support some portion of the expected build-out population is something that needs a second pass to estimate.



## **FFHMPRC Arts Report (Feb 21, 2011)**

### **Preface**

During the original master plan activities that lead to the 2005 rendition of the plan, Plymouth Hall was designated as a potential future home for an Arts Center. The final representation for support of the arts on the campus is indicated in Note 1 on page 8 of the 2005 Master Plan executive summary.

“Includes Town Hall, High School Academy and Parks & Recreation – Cultural Building (either Plymouth or new building).”

The plan also includes an addendum, Exhibit B, describing the various buildings. The description for Plymouth Hall includes:

“Plymouth Hall certainly has unique attributes relative to the remaining campus. The auditorium space and the arts and crafts related spaces lend this structure to be a community based Cultural and performing Arts Center. The renovated auditorium could help fill the need for such space within the community. Although this building lacks some of the character and richness in other Fairfield Hills buildings, a tastefully done renovation could define an enjoyable experience. The court within the gymnasium at Plymouth, however, is far smaller than a regulation size. Furthermore, this part of the structure is in need of repair. This is an area of the building that could be demolished and rebuilt to serve a similar purpose correctly.”

As of 2009, the focus for implementing the arts portion of the plan appears to be to provide a Band Stand in the West Meadow (the intersection of Wasserman and Mile Hill South), at an estimated cost of \$3,750,000, based on the October 22, 2009 handout for the Board of Finance meeting. Jennifer Johnston, the chair of the Cultural Arts Commission, is requesting that the original plans for an Arts Center be addressed again. From an arts perspective, the money identified for the bandstand in the Fairfield Hills Authority CIP request is better used for the Arts Center, because of both its ability to operate year round and its support of a wider array of arts, including performance, classes, galleries, etc.

Current arts groups that would likely be interested in participating with the Arts Center include:

- Friends of Music
- Society of Creative Arts of Newtown (SCAN)
- Flagpole Photographers
- Perhaps, Town Players (already have venue, though)

The model envisioned for the Arts Center is based on the Ridgefield Playhouse, both in terms of audience (regional) and economics (ticket sales). This revenue is expected to offset costs in a very short time period (5 years). [Jennifer will gather more information on the current revenue model and amount that the Ridgefield Playhouse garners and will talk with regional arts organizations re: the competitive environment.] In addition to funding the construction of an Arts Center through the town's CIP processes, funds can also be raised via state/federal grants and local fundraising – though the cost of local venues typically takes a big bite out of fundraising profits.

### **Why Fairfield Hills**

- Centralized location
- Access to 84 – the Arts Center is intended to have a regional scope
- Plymouth Hall has an auditorium with about 800 seats that can be leveraged

**Status Quo**

- Mission: Support the arts in Newtown, includes helping local non-profits. Manage an arts calendar – with budget of \$2000 per year.
  - Cultural Arts Commission arose as a “byproduct” of the involvement with FFH. At the time, other area towns were studied, re: organizations to support the arts.
- Use of Edmond Town Hall.
  - Current costs prohibitive, in part due to conflicts with movies. It costs \$3200 per day on weekends and \$2500 per evening on weekday evenings.
  - Size is inadequate, both stage and seating
  - Infrastructure (electrical, lighting) insufficient
  - Timing difficult, given Edmond is highly utilized

**Needs**

- 800-1000 seats
- Large indoor stage
- Theater as opposed to an “auditorium.” I.e., architecture, esthetics, infrastructure
- Access to highway, given regional focus
- Parking
- Quiet location (away from Wasserman), for both the Arts Center and an outdoor venue
- Full time person to manage scheduling

**Points to Ponder**

- Potentially long-term revenue generation
- Improves access of community to wide assortment of arts
- Act as an anchor for an annual arts festival modeled on the Common Ground Country Fair of Maine (??, see <http://www.mofga.org/TheFair/tabid/135/Default.aspx>)
  - Local artists
  - Music
  - Dance
  - Organic Farmers
  - Recycled arts contest
  - Fireworks
- Synergistic with other uses, re: space, schedules, etc.
- Needs a full-time person to manage scheduling
- Need to work out the numbers, re: costs and expected income

**Extensions**

The Performing Arts Building could be supplemented in two ways to further increase the opportunities for bring the arts to the campus. First, an outdoor venue could be added on a town green for outdoor concerts and art shows. Such a venue should be away from Wasserman, given traffic noise issues. Second, the campus could be the home for a wider “Arts Campus” that would include the Arts Center at Plymouth (or a replacement building), Stratford, the duplexes for “artists in residence” and an outdoor area extending into West Meadow.

## FFHMPRC Events Report (Feb 21, 2011)

**Preface:** Fairfield Hills is used by several organizations for outdoor events, including the Farmers' Market, Relay for Life, and fund raisers for various local organizations. In addition, the Cultural Arts Commission is investigating an arts festival modeled on the Common Ground Country Fair of Maine see <http://www.mofga.org/TheFair/tabid/135/Default.aspx>). They are targeting to have their inaugural festival in 2012, and continue annually thereafter.

The current Master Plan supports outdoor community events as noted on Page 17: *"In the interim and possibly for all time, these areas[i.e., the West and East Meadow areas] will be open space with opportunities for passive recreation such as trails, nature preserves and special event community outdoor activities such as concerts, fairs and similar non-permanent uses."*

### Why Fairfield Hills

- Centralized location – easy to get to
- Large, open spaces
- Parking
- Access to water and toilets

### Status Quo

- **Relay for Life**
  - One day per year from 5PM to 5AM in June.
  - Gravel "track," about ½ mile, laid over the soccer fields.
  - Area for pitching tents nearby
  - One water hook-up
  - Porta-potties
  - No lights
- **Farmers' Market**
  - Tues, June – Oct 2-6, set up at 1 out by 7
  - Old entrance area, provides hard surfaces, shade and nearby parking
  - Generally tranquil area, though close enough to Wasserman for advertising

### Needs

- Large, open spaces (near parking)
- Level areas for participants to walk, push strollers, or navigate using wheel chairs – typically a hard surface is preferred to grass
- Access to water
- Access to toilets
- Parking (near open spaces)
- Quiet location
- Ability to advertise event as it is happening
- Lighting
- Shade

### Points to Ponder

- Centralized location for community to gather
- Open fields require very little in maintenance
- Support local organizations
- Augment overall quality of life by supporting a variety of festivals
- Compete with athletic programs, if playing fields are used
- Potential for trash

**Alternatives**

Relay for Life, nationally, is often held in high school stadiums. However in Newtown, the field is artificial turf and so pitching tents nearby is not possible. At this point, representatives from both Relay for Life and the Farmers' Market are unaware of reasonable alternate locations.



3 Primrose Street  
Newtown, CT. 06470  
Tel. (203) 270-4276  
Fax. (203) 270-1528  
[www.newtown-ct.gov](http://www.newtown-ct.gov)

## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

To: Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee

January 13, 2011

From: Newtown Conservation Commission

Re: Evaluation of Fairfield Hills Land by Conservation Commission. January, 2011

The Conservation Commission has evaluated the land at Fairfield Hills and commissioners have walked all of the undeveloped land. We are providing recommendations for open space set asides at Fairfield Hills under our charter to "Conduct researches into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas in the Town of Newtown" and to "Recommend to the First Selectman, the Legislative Council or the Planning and Zoning Commission such plans and programs (including the acquisition of conservation easements) for the development and use of open areas within the Town of Newtown"

The following features were noted:

- Rolling contoured land
- Scenic vistas from many perspectives
- Scenic Town corridor along Wasserman Way and Mile Hill South Road
- A network of actively used trails, some improved
- Meadow habitat
- Hay fields
- Areas of young deciduous forest
- Pine and spruce stands
- Wolf trees
- Waterways
- Rock walls
- Chimney ruins
- Wildlife corridors
- Many bird species (bobolinks, warblers, woodcocks, blue birds, screech owls, turkey vultures and red tailed hawks have been observed.)

This large tract of land is highly visible upon entering Newtown. Thus visitors to the area and residents of Newtown are greeted by beautiful, rolling vistas. This has been documented as being very important to Newtown's citizens: in a recent survey, residents voted maintaining the rural character of the town as priority number 2.

Because development causes many environmental problems due to forest fragmentation, preserving a large uninterrupted tract of land such as this could alleviate some of these, such as decreasing biodiversity of flora and fauna, increasing incidence of zoonoses, etc. The diverse habitats that are represented (meadow, deciduous and coniferous forested areas, edge habitat) support many different species. Birds of prey are important given the increase in small disease

carrying rodents that occurs with development and forest fragmentation. Migrating birds depend on large, visible areas of undeveloped land as they fly to summer or winter habitats.

The Fairfield Hills campus is a natural site for a Newtown trails hub connecting several already existing trails including Al's trail, the Rail Trail extension from Monroe, and Town property southeast of the junction of Wasserman Way with Nunnawauk Road.

The property supports passive recreational activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog walking, horse riding, biking and wildlife study.

The already developed land in Fairfield Hills is already used for running, walking, dog walking, tricycling, etc. and makes a natural connection to the undeveloped areas. We would suggest that this be taken into account in future planning to ensure that sidewalks are continuous so that foot traffic can be kept safe from automobile traffic.

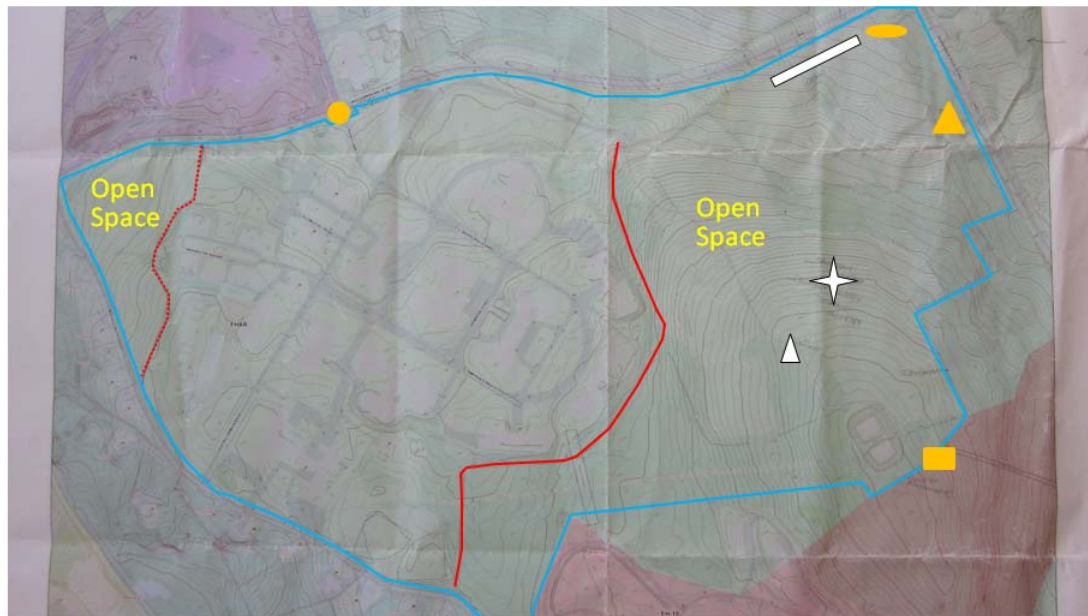
Land at Fairfield Hills would be ideal for a community garden. This is an idea that has been developed in other communities to provide low cost, locally grown produce. Plots could be rented to residents with a sliding scale to allow for access for low income families. Some of the land is flat, fertile and sunny and would be suitable for this use.

The conservation commission recommends preserving the large undeveloped tracts of land as marked on the accompanying map as open space in perpetuity, either through zone change or deed restriction.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you and other Town Boards and Commissions on this important issue. If there are any questions please contact Commission members Marj Cramer at 203-426-5212, Adria Henderson at 203-816-7170, Mary Wilson at 203- 426-6518, or Rob Sibley at 203-270 4276.

**Appendix** (added by Deb Zukowski, Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review member)

Image of map provided by the Conservation Commission. Notes they made during their property review have been called out by the shapes and lines added over the image.



- |  |                          |                   |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|
| — FFH Property Boundary                              | ● Connects to Al's Trail | ▲ Pines Trail     |
| ... West Meadow Boundary                             | ■ Trail to Nunnawalk     | ● Yahoo Hill      |
| — High/East Meadow Boundary                          | △ Conifers?              | ▭ Scenic Corridor |
| ★ Wildlife Corridor, Nesting Habitat, Meadow Habitat |                          |                   |

Note that all markings are approximate.